

RODERICK CAMPBELL, F.R.G.S.

THE  
FATHER OF ST. KILDA

TWENTY YEARS IN ISOLATION  
IN THE SUB-ARCTIC TERRITORY OF THE  
HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY.

BY  
RODERICK CAMPBELL, F.R.G.S.

*WITH PORTRAIT.*

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**TO THE**

**RIGHT HON. LORD STRATHCONA  
AND MOUNT ROYAL,**

**HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR CANADA IN LONDON.**



## PREFACE.

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It was said long ago, that "of the making of books there is no end." I, too, wisely or unwisely, have made a book. In the fag-end of a weary century we have attained to the prosaic faculty of being able to measure sunshine, weigh winds, and analyse stars, yet the primitive instincts of humanity are still unconquered, still unconquerable. A sun-worshipper by nature and early training, I have loved dearly a life in the open air. Is it then folly, ignorance, or presumption that tempts me to become an author? My audacity stares me in the face. Yet "one must accomplish something," says Goethe, "nay, fail in something, to learn to know one's own capacities and those of others." We discover an unsuspected vein in us, only in beginning to work it. And so work grows out of faith, and it takes both to make a man. It is by toil alone that we arrive at our true selves. Only by polishing do we reach the *peculium* of a diamond—its light-giving faculty; and only by the same process do we discover the hidden powers of a man, his peculiar office and function in the world, which none other can exactly fill.

The following pages contain a personal narrative—the history of my early years and

of my travels and adventures, strange and thrilling enough, in the territories around Hudson Bay. I have dealt little in geography and ethnology. Recent works on these matters have added greatly to the knowledge we possessed when I made my youthful journey from Stornoway to Hudson Bay and the Red River of the North. In the account of that and subsequent journeys I am able to give the first complete picture of these scarce-known regions and their primitive inhabitants as they were when first the white trader ventured among them. I have made it my care to tell my story with absolute truthfulness, and have yielded to no temptation to embellish it. If I can induce some youth, conscious of energy, ability and force of will, to ponder over and profit by the lessons of a unique career, I shall be happy; for, according to an ancient saying, to receive is only a single pleasure, but to give is a threefold one. Let me only say, further, that, in the words of Burns, "I am determined to make these lines my confidant. I will sketch every character that in any way strikes me to the best of my observation, with unshrinking justice." Thus he whom these pages do not interest will have only himself to blame should he read further, and if he weary himself over them I can only desire him to recollect that for him they were not written.

R. C.

BUSHEY HEATH,

*April, 1901.*

## INTRODUCTORY.

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THE desire to see foreign countries was awakened in me at a very early age. How strong was this trait of the combined Celtic and Norse blood which ran in my veins my history is witness. As a boy I was brave, ready to hold my own against all comers, light-hearted, but always full of confidence. Whether at angling, rock-fishing, or any game, no boy in the place could beat me. Steadiness of aim and purpose, frankness of speech, and truthfulness at any price were my ideal virtues. As I grew older I cared less for the society of my playmates, and preferred the conversation of the elder folks. Thus I acquired a sagacity beyond my years, and an inborn foresight and regard for the consequences of my actions. I was habitually quick and sound in perception, and tacitly circumspect in all my doings. These qualities often stood me in good stead, and enabled me to get off scot-free when my comrades were caught and punished

for one or other of those pranks in which I was generally the instigator and leader. I was quick, too, at reading character by physiognomy, a gift I have since found invaluable in my singular and varied career. Beyond this I was endowed with an extraordinarily tenacious memory. These qualities being given, how much there is to be found by one who diligently seeks! Yet, strange to say, the possession of these qualities only served to render my boyhood extremely unhappy, because, I presume, of the surroundings in which I was born, or perhaps because of the star under which that insignificant event took place. True, I could never angle for favour or popularity. These I looked upon as ephemeral, and despised; for even in my boyhood I had a strong craving for what was true and lasting.

I was born in the Lewis, in the remotest parish of that Ultima Thule, and nursed among seas and crags, amid surroundings stern and simple such as discipline the spirit for a life of toil. I opened my eyes upon a world of winds and storms, and the instinct of stress and of endeavour thus implanted has never left me, and never will.

There is no finer picture in all the wild and remote Hebrides than the Butt of Lewis,

looming out of the dark blue waters of the North Atlantic like a grim sentinel, guarding "in filial strain Britannia's barren coast." Its steep tower-crowned heights, its rugged rampart of cliffs, have faced for ages the rude winter gales of the broad Atlantic. The coast line is tortured continuously by the ocean waves, which have fretted the reefs into cruel fangs, lurking wolf-like and ravenous round every point and inlet. Among the tumbled precipitous masses, and the rocky ledges of the granite cliffs, the high tremendous seas fling their girdle of snow-white foam, with laughter of tossing surge. At the tide-swept promontory of the Butt's Eye, where one looks east and west over an endless stretch of luminous dark blue water, a rainbow gleams unceasingly on the shimmering veil of flying spray.

Yet notwithstanding the stern majesty of the coast, the island's inner aspect has a charm peculiarly its own. It has a milder climate and softer air than many other parts of the British Isles, and would be a pleasant place to live in all the year round if it were not lashed by so many storms of wind and rain bred in the broad, restless Atlantic, which beats upon its shores. Yet these ocean-born storms lend an invigorating quality to the air, and

keep the hills and valleys of an emerald green unrivalled among these northern islands. The temperate influence of the Gulf Stream softens for it the harsher asperities of winter, and frost and snow do not often come to stay very long. When the sun shines and the skies are clear blue and the sea rolls in, white-crested, to the yellow strand, the dark mist-cloud and sweeping "rack" are easily forgotten.

The island, too, has its share of historical and antiquarian interest, in its varied associations with remote ages and the scanty but venerable ruins that yet remain. The treasures of romance, the tales of daring and of suffering that cling about these antique buildings, ought surely to quicken the imagination of writers and make the task of invention light, for where there is a ruin there is a story. It cannot be doubted that the Roman general Agricola landed at Ness when circumnavigating the British Isles in 82—83 A.D. Three miles west of Port Ness, near the spot where I first saw the light, there is an inlet, a very beautiful spot, called after Agricola's son-in-law, the Stoic philosopher and moralist, Seneca. Thus with a record dating back to the beginning of the Christian era, the Lewis can even claim a patron saint of its own, who lived there for many



years labouring to lighten the darkness of the rude West. He was of the clan MacGhillie Mhoire, and was known as St. Oran the Good and the father of St. Kilda.\* His descendants held the position of Breithcamh of the Lewis till a comparatively late date. He built the old St. Peter's Church in Swanbost Valley at Ness, and also St. Thomas' Temple at Europie, the latter probably in memory of a visit of St. Columba to the island. The literature of the island might have been considerable, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to collect the facts and traditions. Clearly, the island was first peopled from two points—Loch Incharb by the Norsemen, and the Sound of Harris by the Celts. Later, a third colony, of Picts, crossed the Minch from Point of Stoir, and settled on the peninsula of Long Point on Broad Bay, where they built a church, finally extending their conquering rights to Bay-head, now Stearn-a-bhaigh (Stornoway).

This and a great deal more I learned as a

\* Physically, too, the Lewis is also the father of St. Kilda. The legend recorded by Martin, of the warrior queen who hunted deer on the land between St. Kilda and Harris, points to the possibility of men having found their way there at a time when St. Kilda still formed part of the Lewis. This story was also frequently told me by Angus Gunn, as a truism, for he gave utterance to a conscious truth—oral truth—from one generation to another.

boy from old Angus Gunn, the Herodotus of the island, who told his tales of old with much emotion, tears glittering on his long white eyelashes, and running down his aged cheeks. To question his veracity would be an unpardonable insult. He had a rare, a marvellous and uncontaminated memory; and truth telling, literal, strict and absolute, was the first article of his faith. And undoubtedly the accuracy of many of his stories is attested by historical facts. The original people of the island (Celtic) now inhabit the whole western side, having fled before the Pictish intruders to the verge of the Atlantic. These form the population of many hamlets from Callanish—the famous Druidical stone hamlet—in the west, to Borge in the east, and are noticeably distinguished by their dark complexion and diminutive stature. Near all these hamlets may be found visible traces of defensive fortifications in loch or on reef, thrown up when the ocean forbade further retreat. There is no doubt as to the predatory habits of the interlopers. The traditions of their cattle-lifting forays are second only in vivid interest to the thrilling records of the Border raids. Many bloody battles were fought between my ancestors, the burly Morrisons of Ness, and

the fierce Macaulays of Uig, that would not have been unworthy the daring audacity of Rob Roy himself. Would that the author of "Waverley" had visited these scenes! Without him, or another such as he, the tales and traditions of the Long Island must perish unknown to the world.

The island had many successive proprietors, but records only survive of three. The big burly McLeods held sway for a long time, the McKenzies of Seaforth for a shorter period, though their rule will be favourably remembered for its kind and humane dealing with the poor crofters. In 1844 Mr. (afterwards Sir James) Matheson bought the place from the Seaforth trustees for £190,000. The previous year he had married a Canadian lady, a Miss Mary Jane Perceval, of Spencer Wood, near Quebec. With the advent of the new proprietor came in an evil hour the potato disease. In these trying times he showed himself a generous landlord, considerate and humane towards the crofters. As feudal superior he recognised his responsibilities, and did much to improve the condition of the people, of whose nature and requirements he had a true understanding. He established a system of popular education by means of primary schools, and in this good

work Lady Matheson heartily seconded him by building a seminary for the higher education of young ladies. Alas, that the time was gone when I might have shared in these advantages! He assisted many poor people, utterly unable to help themselves, to emigrate to Canada. Many of these it has been my privilege to visit after many years in their new homes amid vastly improved circumstances. This considerate kindness and mild and beneficent habit of dealing secured the cordial and happy relationship between landlord and people with which his name shall always be proudly associated.

But this is not a biography of the first baronet of Achany. Neither is it a history of the Lewis. Should no such history exist, however, this outline will perhaps serve to revive the memory of the old and stimulate the imagination of the young. I have attacked the theme with what Dr. Johnson called "the intrepidity of ignorance." It is submitted as an endeavour, and if the necessity is the justification of an endeavour, the charity that is greater than knowledge will surely temper judgment. Style, subtlety, and literary refinement I have not to give, and, indeed, these do not always attract, sometimes rather repel, the

common-sense reader. I have no qualification, in the literary sense, for the task of writing a book. I have not at command the phrase which condenses the essence of a paragraph or a page. But if the portraits which I here present are painted with neither subtlety nor vigour, I have at least laid my prejudices to sleep, and have, I trust, spoken with candour and charity even of people to whom I am not and cannot be attracted. Indeed, the greatest care has been exercised that no undue personal reference should prejudice judgment.

Yet another word. We hear sometimes of the privilege of birth. For my own part I know of no birth so privileged as that which places a man face to face with the facts of life, untrammelled by tradition and convention. Thus, free from the first in my outlook upon life, my themes ought to appeal to every youth. I hope not a few will find in them matter for thought and consideration. The reader will discover, as he proceeds, how picturesque a career has been developed out of an origin, temperament and circumstances strangely diverse and striking.



# THE FATHER OF ST. KILDA.

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## CHAPTER I.

### BIRTH—CHURCH SCHISM—GENERAL REMARKS.

UNQUESTIONABLY my birth was unpropitious. I came into the world just when Dr. Chalmers and his contemporaries were in the heat of theological contention, when the disruption of the Church of Scotland closed our parish school, and the potato blight darkened the fortunes of the island. With the exception of about ten per cent. in the town of Stornoway, the whole population of the Lewis went over *en masse* to the new party, and in heroic mood, strong though delusive, nailed their colours to the new mast. One feels sometimes inclined to ask what became of religious faith amid all this bickering. While the shepherds belaboured each other with their crooks the wolves carried off the sheep from both sides. Perhaps this was not to be regretted. The spectacle of this theological party strife sets the thoughtful mind to work to find out what lies behind, and so not uncommonly liberty of conscience, tolerance,

justice, and humanity are found. In the outer developments pure reason has only a minor part to play. For Fraser of Brae, Campbell of Row, Erskine of Linlathen, and Morrison of Bathgate were deposed for preaching a large and generous gospel, in advance of the stricter Calvinism, and thus secessions had begun as early as 1733. The blissful inertia of the "Auld Kirk," however, and the unsatisfactory operation of the laws of patronage provided a more rational basis of complaint. And both abuses were more than made up for by the invention by the immortal man of Anstruther of the famous Sustentation Fund.

It is surely not impious to say that Christianity was one thing to Paul, another to John, and yet another to James. For their conceptions of it introduce us to three separate thought-worlds. And so through the ages. There are Calvin and Rabelais, contemporary ecclesiastics, fellow-countrymen, each furnished with all the learning of the day, each with the same religious facts within his view, yet one offers us the "Institutes," and the other "Pantagruel." The African Augustine and the Alexandrian Origen had the same records and traditions to go upon; but how different an affair each made of it! The brothers Newman, again, men so closely related, so



pure, and so high-minded—is not their absolute oneness on mathematical questions in itself a proof that some other element than pure reason had come into play to produce their religious differences? And so the minds mystic and the minds rationalistic, the minds inductive and the minds deductive, tunnel continually through the same mountain all to emerge at last into the same light.

The true secret of our theologies lies deep down in that “philosophy of the unconscious” which waits yet to be explored. It is the secret of temperament which creates for each of us a separate universe, a separate creed. What a man sees depends as much on the inner instrument as on the outer object, and a Swedenborg could never see as a Voltaire. The truth lies in the Aristotelian principle “that our nature is not simple, and there is in us an element of corruption which makes us prone to change. We are all material as well as spiritual, sensual as well as intellectual, composite organisms.”

But to return to the disruption in the Lewis. There was no compromise possible. A Scotchman spends no small part of his life in splitting theological hairs, while his neighbour uses the hairs to stuff a social mattress on which he may comfortably repose. Feeling ran high, and angry words were spoken. There was no

lack of faith and zeal, though a good deal of mere complaisance and unreasoned emotion, among the people. Ignorance and fear led many of them, and they followed like sheep with docility and such thought as they were capable of, hoping only that the new departure would not long remain "a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." For this they had not long to wait, for soon there happened in the Lewis one of the most wonderful revivals of the century. The Scottish Church had hitherto occupied itself chiefly with religion in the abstract. The broader minds had now come to understand that there is a sphere of "applied" religion as truly as of "applied" mathematics. They were beginning to recognise that religion comprises in the true range of its operations the whole of human life. Yet the Westminster Confession still reigned unchallenged. The clergy and the elders subscribed it, and the immortal Shorter Catechism, which has done so much to train the Scottish mind in metaphysics, carried its theology into every school and home. People thought in the categories of Calvinism. Things happened because God had so ordained. Faith was His gift, and to it men were elected. Unless so elected, their names could not be written in the book of life. Original sin was as worthy of death as actual, for all were involved in

the guilt of Adam's transgression. The Atonement was for the elect; the men for whom Christ died could not but be saved; those for whom He had not died could not but be lost. The work of the Spirit was as restricted as the sacrifice of the Son, and so the numbers of the saved and the lost were fixed beyond possibility of increase or decrease. Even as a boy I grieved over these harsh beliefs, this narrowing down of grace and of salvation. But I fear I had no sympathisers.

The *quoad sacra* parish of Ness was thus suddenly broken up, and although born in the bosom of the good "Auld Kirk," I became a Dissenter at a very early age. I remember the long walk with my parents to the baptistery, a temporary substitute for the new church, not yet built, the funds for which, according to an impious critic, were yet to be drawn from the slaves of the Southern States of America, where the law of compensation is exacting payment for the excesses of the "Auld Kirk." So complete was the change in popular feeling, that the "Auld Kirk" minister, whom the people had a short time before worshipped as a kind of superior being, had now hastily to leave manse, church, and parish. Having been crammed with texts from Holy Writ, they probably remembered one which says that the hireling fleeth because he is a hireling. The

case was the same in all the rural parishes except that of Barvas, where the Rev. Mr. McRae bravely held his pulpit as a captain might his quarterdeck, though without supporters worth counting. Israel had taken to stoning her old prophets.

In the spring-time we could see the Dundee whalers sailing past the Butt's Eye for Davis Straits, and possibly the ships *Erebus* and *Terror* passing to their doom in the same regions in search of the unsearchable Northwest Passage, carrying Sir John Franklin and 128 souls, destined never more to be seen by sorrowful friends and grateful country, and subsequently search expeditions in earnest quest of the same. But my youthful community knew nothing beyond the optical vision; knowledge of all this realisation being cruelly closed against them at the expense of religious upheaval, burning a red-hot iron into their brows. The Church of our John Knox, of George Wishart, and of Jenny Geddes, sustained a severe shock. Out of that wreck there might come something that should be for the Divine glory, and praise will be abundantly fulfilled—

“ She let the legions thunder past,  
And plunged in thought again.”

“ Talking of sects till late one eve,  
Of the various doctrines the saints believe—  
That night I stood in a troubled dream  
By the side of a darkly flowing stream.”

## CHAPTER II.

### MY PARENTAGE AND FAMILY HISTORY— SCHOOL-DAYS.

ABOUT the close of my fifth year my life almost came to an abrupt termination. The sensitive heart of infancy is quick in apprehension when its happiness is threatened, and in many secret misgivings I told myself that life was already finished. But I recovered, and became one of the healthiest of the sons of Adam.

I was the third son of my mother and fifth child of my father. At the time of my earliest recollections my father was captain of his own boat, lived in his own house, farmed several acres of good land, had many sheep and cattle, and kept a man-servant and a horse. We children of the house occupied a very happy position in the social scale, a position open to all good influence, high enough to allow us to see about us models of good manners, of self-respect, of piety, and simple dignity. Amply furnished with all the necessities of life, we

had no reason for shame, as we had none for pride. We never knew what chronic under-feeding was, but we were brought up by the wisest of mothers in a Spartan simplicity of diet, wholesome and bracing in its effect, which stood my physical frame in good stead in future years. For us the humble prayer of Agur, "Give me neither poverty nor riches," was truly realised.

The branch of the great clan of which my father, Malcolm Campbell, came was not a direct offshoot from Argyll, but from Glenorchy, the Marquis of Breadalbane's district. The family came to Port Ness from Cape Wrath about the year 1663. They were the descendants of Kenneth Buey McIver and his brother Farquhar, who left Argyllshire about 1560 with a large number of clansmen, and marched northwards to Caithness, scouring the country as they went. The details of their history are lost in the haze of tradition. The early title of my clan was O'Duine, who lived about 1100.

My worthy sire himself was spare in figure, of active habits, an early riser, and possessed of much natural shrewdness and warm affection. He was loud-voiced and outspoken, sometimes utterly unreserved. This frankness and his

transparent honesty won for him many friends and admirers. Here, it was felt, was a man who had bravely grappled with life's earliest problems, to whom life was no holiday, but a steady march onward and upward to a goal assured by Christian faith. This brave faith he had no doubt inherited from his mother, Catherine Bain, who lived a noble Christian life. In later years, however, his sense of his own unworthiness became morbid, and his tendency to dwell on the fleetness of life and the approach of death gradually tinged his thoughts with overmuch of the Celtic melancholy. As his life ebbed his religious anxieties caused him much suffering, which saddened his days more or less to the end.

To my mother, *née* Jessie Morrison, I owe everything, even my outward appearance, and appropriately my name. Her family gave several ministers to the church at Ness, and after the last of them I am called. She was the daughter of Allan Morrison, whose great-grandfather, Roderick Morrison, was titular proprietor of Habost and also of Ness. Thus, from time immemorial, her family owned the extreme northern point of the Lewis; and their chief, Morrison of Habost, for many generations held the honourable position of

hereditary breithcamh, or judge, over the whole of Lewis down to the year A.D. 1613. The nature of my ancestor's judgeship is described by Sir R. Gordon in explaining the office of a breive among the islanders :—"The breive is a kind of a judge, who hath an absolute judicatorie, unto whose authoritie and censure they willinglie submit themselves when he determineth any debateable question between partie and partie." \* That learned man of law Sir Alexander Morrison, who is quoted as an authority to the present-day, no doubt derived his tastes from his ancestor, the Ness breive. For a badge the Morrisons have a drift log, "sqoidchladaich," suggested by the logs which the storms of the Atlantic cast ashore at Ness. No other clan has this badge. Their coat of arms consists of—argent, three Moors' heads, couped, sable, banded of the first; crest, three Saracens' heads, conjoined in one neck proper, the faces looking to the chief dexter and sinister sides of the shield †; motto, "Pretio prudentia præstat" ("Prudence predominates over price"). The tradition attached to this crest and coat of arms tells how my worthy and rugged

\* See Sir R. Gordon's "Earl of Sutherland," p. 268.

† See Burke's "Heraldic Dictionary."



ancestor the MacGhillie Mhoire, at the siege of Acre in 1191, was seen to fly before three Saracens, who attacked him together. His flight, however, was but a feint, and when he had drawn them far enough from their supporters, he turned and slew them one by one. The saying went round the Christian army, "One *More* from Scotland is more than a match for three pagan *Moors*," and from this the heraldic bearings were devised.

The titular proprietorship of Habost remained in my mother's family till her great-grandfather's time on the sublet system, which was abolished as the population increased. The father of this last proprietor deserves a few words to himself. He was the Hercules of the island, a man of immense physical proportions and enormous strength. His voice and manner suggested a constitution of iron and health so impregnable that no insurance office dealing in life annuities would have ventured to look him in the face. He was thought good for nine lives at least; there seemed no possible avenue where death or disease could force a breach. Yet so poor is the anchorage of human hopes that, amid all these anticipations, this Scotch granite ancestor of mine suddenly struck his flag and died at the comparatively

early age of sixty years. Angus Gunn had promised him two hundred. He seemed built in an antediluvian type and for age-long duration, yet he did not reach even the modest span allotted by the Psalmist.

For the rest the story of my ancestry rests upon Angus Gunn's somewhat hazy version, and I do not propose to give rein to my Celtic imagination in making it more precise. Being a Scot, I have naturally begun with a pedigree, but the reader will admit that this is but a very small ell of the genealogical tree.

During my childhood my mother suffered for some years from ill-health. But she was still erect, dignified, graceful in person, and possessed of admirable beauty of countenance. Her dark eyes had a striking lambency, her smile inspired love, the habit of her genial mind was to reflect the moods of others and seek to make them happy, never thinking of herself, and all this she did with singular tact and a playful, simple grace. Utterly incapable of servility or obsequiousness, her gifted and lofty nature was always in peace and charity. Contentment with all around her was stamped upon her countenance and mien. Yet there was no weakness in her character, and, like Cromwell's mother, she could exhibit in a

marked degree, when other assistance failed her, the noble faculty of self-help. Such was my mother, a wise and noble woman. She has passed away like the setting sun. Suns do not set to die, but to rise again; and so would it be with the setting sun of what we called the dream and drama of life.

The whirligig of time goes round, and there comes a truce even to religious disputes. The disruption / agitation which had closed the schools ended at last, and left calm in the island. But I was in my tenth year before I began to study the curves and angles of the Roman alphabet. It was by no means an easy task after several years of truancy to sit quietly most of the day facing those horrible letters. Many a time I might well have wished that Cadmus, King of Thebes, had never been born to afflict future generations in far-off isles of the sea with his abhorred alphabet. My reason and my imagination lay prisoners, held down by the most depressed spirit that ever tenanted the frame of a boy. I was not of a disposition, however, to give in easily, and I fell upon a scheme for making peace with my tormentors. At play-time I ran to the sea-shore, book and stick in hand, and drew the outlines of my foes upon the sand.

Gradually I became familiar, nay friendly, with them, and my hatred gave place to a sense of their usefulness and worth.

I remember one of my companions who shared my difficulties, but fell upon a very different scheme for overcoming them. Never was the study of hieroglyphics attacked by a method so original and so bold. He was not a stupid boy at play, though bewildered into imbecility by the task of learning. He was not an ordinary boy, however, and had a pair of ice-coloured, ball-less eyes, and various other abnormal characteristics, including apparently the digestion of an ostrich. For one night, being in despair over this unconquerable alphabet, he carefully cut out the twenty-seven abstruse symbols, put them inside a piece of dough, and ate them. Alas that the morning light brought no solution of his difficulties! He never learnt his letters. Had Nature flung him forth upon the world, with his poor distracted brain, in some mood of cruel sport, or had she given him a double share of her own secret, so that he needed no other teacher? Perhaps it was so.

Our teacher had of course been imported from the mainland, and I very soon observed that he looked upon his pupils as inferior

beings. This, of course, made sympathy impossible between us, and was a serious bar to progress. There was no compulsory attendance, and only those boys went to school whose inborn love of knowledge led them to do so of their own free will. Parents seldom attempted to enforce daily attendance, clinging still to the primitive idea that the less educated a boy was, the less chance there was of his leaving the island. The only compulsory item in our school attendance was the daily contribution of a peat for the schoolroom fire. The boy who came without his peat under his arm was absolutely refused admittance.

As for the matter of his teaching, there was but one subject: the faults of the lately adored "Auld Kirk" and the perfections of the new *régime*. Since the days of the disruption sectarianism racked the whole island. Still the former way of thinking had its supporters, and there was room for bitter controversy. People lived at enmity within the same house, sitting at the same fireside, and probably praying silent, bitter prayers to the same Providence. But even our instruction in ecclesiastical differences was soon cut short. One day several of us lingered overlong at our play, and were late in returning

to school. The teacher thereupon assumed his prerogative of using the "tawse," and punished us somewhat severely. Among the culprits were the minister's children. This outrage on the dignity of the ministerial office was unpardonable, and the teacher, unfortunately for him, and also for me, was instantly dismissed. Once more I was thrown back, and my hopes of learning disappointed just when they were at their highest. For only a few days before I had, by dint of hard work, been awarded a prize-book for exceptional diligence in study, and surely never did man or boy feel more honoured since the days of Mordecai the Jew. But again I was to feel the pinch of the shoe, not in money, but in education.

I was not to be beaten, however, and I made a firm resolution that a task of reading should be performed regularly each day. From that day I was my own master and my own pupil. I had my own thoughts, and faced for myself the problems that met me. The discipline of it all was good for me. "The virtue lies in the struggle, not in the prize."

As a result of the religious upheaval in the island the resources of the people had been heavily drawn upon to provide a new Free

Church. A manse was as yet beyond the reach of the community, and the minister was accommodated in the house of the miller. In Scotland there is an extraordinary respect and honour paid to a Free Church minister, the more perhaps because he is so often a son of the people who has raised himself by his work and his exertions to this highly esteemed position. The mere accent of the word "menister" suggests deification, and his presence produces an effect of awe. Unfortunately the miller proved unworthy of the honour conferred upon his house, and, what was more serious, unworthy of his place among a simple, God-fearing, and honest-living folk. When his offence against the hitherto unimpeachable moral tone of the community was discovered, he was summoned before the minister and Kirk session and ruthlessly excommunicated. He was driven from the parish and the island, and if the will of the minister and Kirk session could have brought it about, would have been summarily transported to Van Diemen's Land under sentence of penal servitude for life, with a strong recommendation for eternal punishment. "Then gently scan your brother-man" was scarcely the motto of these stern judges.

That there was a lack of justice as well as of charity in the local ideas of righteousness was evident from their appreciation of the new miller. He was a man after the heart of the religious community,—a Free Kirk elder in whom should be no guile. Yet in a larger view he can hardly be said to have obliterated the stain left by his predecessor upon the mill-house. For he had not been long its tenant before he showed that his special besetting sin of covetousness was likely to work as much evil as his predecessor's. By his influence thirty acres of land were taken at one stroke from his neighbours without any abatement of rent, and walled round in solid security. He then sought to evict from this stolen stronghold of his, two families who had lived there for generations. One of the cottages belonged to a man called Shiemas Oig, and so distracted with grief was he at the thought of being compelled to leave his home that his mind became quite unhinged, and for the rest of his life he was a hopeless lunatic. His wife was compelled to earn a livelihood as she could, and betook herself to the unlawful practice of shebeening whisky; while Ian Bain, the other dispossessed cottager, soon found rest in death. I am far from saying that the elder



acted thus because he was an elder. He was merely one of those who try to serve two masters, and being keenly conscious that there was a sphere of self-interest as well as a sphere of religion, he wished to fix an anchor on something that had promise for the present as well as on assurance for the future.

Yet a religious revival of extraordinary intensity had accompanied this man's arrival in the parish. Daily labours, family duties, all ordinary avocations, were neglected. For the day of judgment was at hand, bringing with it the end of all things mortal. The metrical version of the Psalms of David was studied and repeated with earnestness and zeal, but as for other reading, what was it but a lie, dishonourable to the Supreme, and disgraceful in a professing Christian? All innocent amusement was deemed as out of place as a ballet dance during an earthquake. Plato himself turned Puritan would have felt that too perfect attainment brings despair when attainment means the laying to heart of the Shorter Catechism, surely, as it seems to me, the work of befogged theologians deliberately sitting down to invent an instrument of torture for the immature intelligence. Very young I had to digest as best I could the Ten

Commandments as given to Moses, and even the stronger meat of effectual callings and such doctrines. I asked my mother once why all communicants at the Lord's Supper were old. "Because they know what they are doing, and are responsible," she said. "They are not any better off than the others," I replied. "They go at their peril, and if they stay away, it is at their peril. Tell me how they are saved thus." I was promptly sent supperless to bed for my logic.

Yet this revival of Calvinistic severity had no effect in putting an end to the superstitions which still lingered among the people. My father, the son, as I have already said, of a notably Christian mother, Kate Bain, tells that when he was a young man one of the last duties he had to perform each evening at twilight was to carry a pot of milk to a hillock hard by, and pour it over the fairy abodes. There they held high court in their palace beneath the fairy hill, and from there they sallied forth at night, to do good or evil according as they had been used: to bake and spin and work for favoured mortals while they slept; oftener to wreak revengeful spite on those who had failed to propitiate them, and to carry off the young and fair to their mysterious hillock abodes, around which

weird strains of fairy music might at times be heard.

Of my own knowledge I can record one serious example of extreme superstition in my own parish. A young man was very "sweet" upon a maiden, and the "cries" were almost in view when suddenly his mother turned round — on the bride elect, and openly accused her mother and aunt of witchcraft. They had, she declared, obtained licence from the devil, and, transformed into hares, had sucked the cream from the teats of the cow, carried it home, and made all the butter they required, and more. The young man, "full of all subtlety and mischief," as St. Paul says, was nothing loath to take up the task of proving his mother in the right. He made two false assumptions, however, which proved disastrous to his attempts. In the first place, he took for granted that, as the girl's mother was lame, he would know her even in hare shape by this peculiarity; and, in the second place, he believed that the girl still loved him enough to save him from being torn to pieces by the witches, whom she would no doubt accompany in order to learn the dark art. One evening, as he set off to court another girl, two witch hares and a leveret met him, which compelled a hasty

retreat. After arming himself with a boat's helm, he undauntedly set out again to the new ground of his choice. But he had not gone far before the witches made a second attack, and before they had done with him they tore out by the roots every hair that God had planted on his big head. He was afterwards carried, more dead than alive, to a neighbour's house, where he slept twice round the clock, so great was the relief after the night's tension. Cunningly he shaved himself to support his mother's superstition, but nature betrayed his scheme by a copious growth of hair.

Tales of this kind sort badly with the tenets of strict Calvinism, but these simple islanders found room in their believing hearts for both. Witchcraft is older than Calvinism. It has had a longer hold on the minds of men. The historical research of our own day has failed to find its origin. It has been with the human race from the beginning.

The world is indeed a slow learner. Happily it has an infinitely patient Teacher. Happily, too, we have the assurance that things are moving towards a glorious consummation when superstition and error shall be driven away, and when God shall reconcile all things unto

Himself, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.

But if superstition did not retreat before religion, education did. The schools were closed. Once more, as had happened before, our juvenile energy was frittered away on unintelligible metaphysics and theology when we ought to have been acquiring a solid grounding in reading, writing, and arithmetic. The monotony of the continual "spiritual" instruction became well-nigh unbearable. It produced a kind of intellectual squint, and utterly deadened the imagination. It was especially hard on such a temperament as mine, for I was always of a romantic turn and saw realities through a glamour of my own creating. I lived in a future of my own imagining—a future of far travel and strange experience, for which it was my whole longing and desire to prepare myself. Yet knowledge seemed to be refused me, and despairing presentiments darkened my whole life at this period, though never without intermittent flashes of hope. All my experience of life leads me to believe with Goethe that our wishes are but the expression of our capacities and harbingers of our future attainments.

The "Auld Kirk" had become anathema

maranatha to the people, for the Free Church were eager to find another God for themselves by mental or spiritual process! Indeed, we were always on the *qui vive* for a spiritual convulsion. That the social state of the entire community was truly indescribable goes without saying, and I mentally anathematise the day in which I was born.

From the grand humanism of the minister down to the fancies of whimsical mystics, who hold that it is even a sin to wear garments, and believe that heaven is only about six miles off, we had a little more than enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love, one another. The very whisper of the "Auld Kirk" intoxicated the people and deprived them of all faculties of examination and judgment. Why, it seemed to my youthful intelligence but a day of wrath, the true gospel of charity for the moment being sealed. Nay, I go farther, that if any man had lost his religion, let him repair to this island, and I warrant him he would find it. On the other hand, I had almost said, too, if any man had a religion, let him but come hither, and I warrant him also he would go pretty near to lose it. Nevertheless the spirit of religion bloweth where it listeth, like the wind. We cannot tell

whence it cometh<sup>1</sup> or whither it goeth. It would not be religion if we could calculate it and reduce it to measure, not because the Divine nature is what it is, but because human nature is what it is. I see before me the ancient Church of St. Peter and the Temple of St. Thomas, whose crumbled walls have had shelter from the arctic blasts, behind the high black granite rocky ledges of the Butt, for countless years. Their architects, builders, and worshippers—pagan, Druidical, and Christian—have passed away with their different views of the gods they served, in accordance with the inexorable laws of nature, in the unwritten history of their time. We must follow them in our harsh Calvinistic views of God, whose nature is all love and tenderness. But these crumbling walls remain, which are now, by an unknown instinct, made immortal, if not classic, by one born out of season. Tradition says that both were built by means of the sin of Sabbath-breaking, the islanders having begun that process from the year in which St. Columba visited the island, and continued it successfully for centuries. In those early times those who felt a necessary duty, or an overmastering desire to milk or even graze their cows on Sundays, had to pay

a toll to the Church for permission to sin. Alas! with all our religion, persons now desirous of breaking the Sabbath here may learn from this that they can do so without licence or toll. It will be nothing short of a miracle if the full depth of this change has not yet to be plumbed, and if a few disagreeable surprises are not still in store for the gullible "Auld Kirk"—going away from God to God!

Once more my hopes were raised high by the unexpected arrival of a second teacher. Alas! his teaching was but a drop in the ocean. His system was the same as his predecessor's, and his fate not unlike. This time the ground of his dismissal was some sectarian bitterness, arising directly from the presence of the minister's son in the school. Assuredly that Free Church Moses of ours had a wonderful influence, and in his son we felt that he had brought an "olive branch" which, by some malign miracle, was turned into a fiery serpent. He may have had the theology of Thomas Aquinas and the wisdom of Aristotle, but he was certainly sadly lacking in tact and taste. There was no originality in his views, though much Scotch shrewdness and humour in the language in which he clothed them. But, whatever the cause, his



power over the people was extraordinary. Humour under control is a valuable element in a minister, and many will admit that the sense of humour in private intercourse is even good. It is pathetic to think, however, what crises would have been tided over, and what "removals" avoided, if only ministers had sometimes been readier for amusement than vexation. Yet the people are to blame, the crazy fanatics, the hard children of this world. He came to the parish something after the fashion that James Nayler rode into Bristol in 1656. This is not, perhaps, a very becoming way to speak of a man, but let me assure the reader, there is more lucidity than intentional disrespect in the phrase.

## CHAPTER III.

I RUN AWAY FROM HOME—THE RETURN OF THE  
PRODIGAL—DEATH OF MY MOTHER—BAN-  
TRACH DHOMHNIULL ROY.

"Time wasted in youth is one of the mistakes which are  
beyond correction."

At the millhouse was a young man-servant from Stornoway, between whom and myself a strong mutual liking had sprung up, more than a liking, indeed, rather a love as of David and Jonathan. In recalling it I am reminded of Montaigne's words regarding his friendship with La Boetie, "having seized all my will, induced the same to plunge and lose itself in his, which likewise, having seized all his will, induced it to plunge and lose itself in mine, with a mutual greed and with a like concurrence." Accordingly, when my friend found an engagement in the stables of the proprietor close to Lewis Castle, and near his home, he found no great difficulty in persuading me to elope with him across the moor, and in a few days I, too, was installed in the service of the first baronet

of Achany, in the proud position of "herd loon."

There is a story of a British Premier's reply to a member of his party who expressed disappointment at receiving no higher honour than knighthood. "I assure you," said the Premier, "you are underrating the honour of knighthood. It satisfied Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Isaac Newton."

Like the discontented member, I was not satisfied with the honour I had received, though the position of "herd loon" on the proprietor's estate would have been knighthood to many a Scotch lad. I spent my days alone in a large walled park of about forty acres, having as sole companions a dozen or more of Irish cows. I had plenty of time to spare for deep meditations, the first and foremost subject being my future prospects. Vague and empty they seemed as the great field in which I roamed. I saw other lads passing and repassing to and from school, and grief and anger at my own deprivation possessed me so that, like Job of old, I cursed the day I was born. At last out of my daily meditations grew the audacious resolution to ask the bailiff to allow me to go to school two hours in the forenoon and two in the afternoon. In return I was willing to

sacrifice all my wages, though, indeed, I had no idea what these were to be, my friend having settled the matter for me. I was prepared to point out to the bailiff that, as the park was walled, my being there made no difference whatever to the cows; they would eat and digest just as much grass in my absence as in my presence.

I went to Sandy Buey, the bailiff. He received my plea with a smile, which showed me that my proposition was to be left indefinitely unconsidered. A higher authority, however, was over the understeward, the inexorable estate factor himself. And with bated breath and beating heart, and limbs quivering like an aspen leaf, to him I went. A perilous business I felt it to be to face a man so powerful and in religious matters, as I had been taught, so "unsound."

On being ushered into the august presence of the titular governor of the Long Island, I felt as if seized by a sudden attack of lockjaw. The mere glance of the great man seemed to ask a dozen angry questions. "Who is this stripling? Where has he come from? What does he want in my office? Show him the door and the street." Being told by the usher that I came from the "Square," he sharply asked

my business. Drawing my slender frame up to its full height, I boldly repeated the logical proposition concerning the cows and the grass which the bailiff had treated with such scant respect. His face, anything but amiable in his better moods, gathered itself into a grimness altogether terrifying. "You impudent fellow, your audacity surpasses anything in my experience. Do you think I am going to feed and pay you to go to school? You could learn nothing if you did go to school. Fishing and planting a few potatoes need no schooling. ~~Nonsense! Impudence! Away with you instantly!~~" But I did not go. I pled long and earnestly, asking at last but one hour daily. But my remonstrances might as well have been addressed to the stones of the street for all the impression they made upon him. Finally he got so angry that he told me he would send me to prison instead of to school if I did not leave his office sharp, for he didn't want an idiot in his service. It was doubtless his modesty that led him to waive his own claim to that distinction. The threat of prison was more alarming to me than even the monotonous prospect of watching the cows eat grass, so, choosing the least of two evils, I then and there threw down the seals of office,

with the title and emoluments, of "herd loon" upon the floor, and speedily found myself in the street, a knight errant in earnest, a paladin drifted into the wrong century.

One might have been inclined to think that a man of education would have treated my request, however unreasonable, at least with good temper. But he did me a better turn than either of us guessed at the moment. Truly there was a merciful Pilot at the helm of my affairs, and the casting out of this Ishmael was a blessing in disguise. A calamity at the time was really the greatest stroke of luck which had ever happened to me.

I walked about the streets of Stornoway, down to where the point of rock juts out into the bay. At the end of this point stands the ancient ruined castle. Many a woeful and romantic tale lies buried there, irrecoverably lost to history. The slope behind this point is covered now with buildings in substantial blue granite masonry, topped by the grand "auld kirk," the only indestructible one in the island, with steeple pointing heavenwards as if to defy disruptionists to all eternity. Opposite, on the west side of the bay, stood the lordly castle of the new proprietor. If I had gone to him with my proposition, doubtless I should have fared

better. But it was not to be. A wiser Leader held my hand.

In the distance I saw Arnish Rock and its strange beacon, where no lamp is ever lit, but which sends a clear light far over the sea. The method of reflected light is familiar enough now; but, for the benefit of my unversed readers, I shall describe it here.

On the mainland six hundred feet away is a lighthouse proper, and from a window in its tower a stream of light is projected on a mirror in the lantern on the summit of the Rock of Arnish. The rays are caught by an arrangement of prisms, and by their action are converged to a focus outside the lantern, from which point they diverge in the desired direction.

It was behind this rocky point of Arnish that bonny Prince Charlie, wandering in 1745 a deserted refugee, accompanied by the loyal and devoted Flora Macdonald, received news of the dour refusal of the Stearn-a-bhaigh authorities to extend him a welcome. There was comfort for the Ness "herd-loon" in the thought that, harshly as Stornoway had treated him, royalty had fared no better at its hands. At least I had got from it all the benefit of a dire experience, inexpressible experience,

before my pride was sufficiently humbled to allow me to return to Ness. So I said, "I will arise and go to my father." And if there was no fatted calf to kill, I got pot-luck and a loving mother's embrace. Yet discontentment had grown upon me till, like the pearl in the oyster, it had become a "splendid disease." Nothing could be done for me beyond prescribing tonics for a weak mind, and this my mother nobly did. At the same time my clothes upon my back were falling in rents. Truly fate did its best to force me into a corner, and all but succeeded. As the parsons say, "Here endeth the first lesson."

Needless to say, no change had taken place in Ness during my absence. It was October when I returned, the month during which rural Lewis holds its festival of religious oratory—the "Sacrament." At that time everything that has been done or thought or felt in the spiritual sphere finds its ample audible expression. Week by week in the various valleys in rotation immense crowds may be seen who have come from all parts of the island to listen eagerly. It is far from my wish to speak slightly of such a grand parliament of religion. There is no worthier subject of



speech nor any that has inspired nobler utterances. A Chrysostom in Greek, a Savonarola in Italian, a Massillon in French, a Whitefield in English, a Christmas Evans in Welsh, and such men as Peter McLean, of Stornoway, and John Kennedy (both of whom I remember) in Gaelic—these have produced effects on the human heart by the handling of this theme such as are not to be paralleled in political, or any other, oratory. This power of the spoken word is one of the primal forces among men, and will not die out, but remain one of the chief governing powers of the world.

No listener among our glens ever tired of these sermons. The people had a thirst for sermons, four hours long, or more, as they might be. And, truly, the open-air temple is so surrounded by that which is most beautiful that it is made easy through Nature to commune with Nature's God. Indeed, I am of opinion that fishermen are emphatically of a religious turn of mind. The nature of their employment is more calculated to direct their thoughts inward than is the case in most other industries. The solitary work of the miners in the bowels of the earth, one might think, would have a similar tendency; but there is no evidence in mining districts that

religion has more than ordinary influence in regulating the lives of the people. In both it may, however, be said to act thus: "wrest from life its uses and gather from life its beauty." I have never forgotten Peter McLean's text, "Anns an la sin bithidh tobar air fhosgladh do thigh Dhaibhidh, agus do luchd-aiteachaidh Jerusaliem, air son peacaidh agus air son neòghloine" (Zech. xiii. 1). This good man was an emotional, even passionate, preacher. In fluency and fervour he has probably been surpassed by none. His voice was remarkably clear, vibrating, and penetrating, so as to thrill through the largest church, and there was no chance of any one's dozing when he was in the pulpit. When denouncing some wrong which had roused his indignation his feelings seemed to get the better of him, and he "slashed" with his voice in a perfect hurricane of verbal blows. My hair felt as if it rose on end. He carried his hearers in chariots of fire. He bore down on their conscience with irresistible and overwhelming power. He was the Michael Angelo of the pulpit in Lewis.

John Kennedy, of Dingwall, was more refined and scholarly, brimming with knowledge, and a master of beautiful illustration. His style

was highly imaginative, and his gestures free and graceful. One illustration I specially noted and remembered. His text was "Agus thubhairt mi ris. A Thighearn, tha fhios agadas. Agus thubhairt e rium, Is iad so iadsan a thainig a' hamhghar mōr; agus nigh iad an trusgain, agus rinn iad geal iad ann am fuil an Uain" (Rev. vii. 14). His subject was tribulation, and explaining that the word came from the Latin *tribulum*, meaning a roller or sledge for threshing corn, he showed that in the same way tribulation sifts men as wheat.

But the people of my native parish would do well if they would, like the Moravians, make Christ the Inspirer of fishing, housekeeping, and ploughing, as well as of psalms and prayers. Still it is no disadvantage that there is in their character underneath the genuinely religious qualities a basis of worldly wisdom and homely prudence which will never fail to have its value.

To turn to the elders,—ornaments to any cause. In addition to their duties in catechising the whole parish, a most trying ordeal awaited them at Communion. For the presiding minister might turn up the Bible at any place where the leaves might chance to open, and call upon one of the elders to address the

multitude on a certain verse of which he had no more intimation than of the day of his death. After an oration of an hour or more the speaker had the privilege of choosing a text in the same haphazard manner and calling upon a brother elder to discourse upon it, and so on, until all the Kirk session had shown their expository paces. That such a system was possible shows how deeply these men must have drunk in early life at the fountains of Scripture, stimulated partly by training and habit, partly by the inborn religious instincts of their race. Truly their knowledge of the Scriptures might put to shame many ministers of the gospel. It was no small reproach to the Church and the Sustentation Fund that all those arduous duties which should by right devolve upon those who receive its emoluments were undertaken without remuneration merely out of whole-souled devotion and exemplary zeal. Such was their singleness of purpose that, with but one exception, no friction ever arose among them. This is worth recording for the attention of those outside of the highlands and islands. This alone proves them to have been worthy Christian men, among whom conscience was supreme.

This Communion season was exceptionally

memorable to me, for it was the last which my mother saw. The winter that followed was extremely cold, and her illness, already of long duration, became increasingly alarming, making it evident that nothing could be done but await with resignation and patience the approaching end. The end did come, on Christmas Eve, 1858, and she began her eternity of rest, a golden circle, like the ring upon her dying finger, without breach or ending. When the long-dreaded blow fell, which no agony of suspense, no schooling of philosophy, no practice of Christian submission, can altogether soften, I was prostrated by an insidious malady. A cold winter's blast off the Atlantic Ocean, a wind that might have swept the fields of death for a million years, was heard outside as I came to look at her. The winter's wind, the image of death, the imagination of the heavenly Jerusalem, have been inextricably mingled in my thoughts ever since. There was the angel-face. They told me the features had not changed. Had they not? The serene and noble forehead—that might be the same. But the frozen eyelids, the awful darkness that gathered beneath them, the marble lips, the stiffening hands laid palm to palm as if in the last

solemn supplication—had these not changed? Was that my mother as in life? Verily in death there lies a mute, ineffable, voiceless horror before which all human courage is abashed. Yet it was not fear, but awe, that fell upon me as I looked, for I saw, not the visible symbol of mortality, but the great promise of eternity encircling and bearing upwards into the far heavens the departed spirit. Hastily I kissed the cold lips that I should kiss no more, and slunk away from the house with stealthy steps, like a guilty thing. "Be calm, good wind; blow not a word away." The love which is altogether holy between child and mother is no doubt privileged to linger through life and revisit by glimpses the sunshine and the darkness of declining years. Thus I felt that if the intelligence given by a kind Creator, and nourished by her, were not to be altogether obliterated, the hearty desire to do justice to her memory should always remain with me. Nay, from the moment I left her grave I had but one hope: that she whose spirit was watching my humble endeavours might not watch in vain.

After my mother's funeral no power on earth could persuade me to return home. Grief had

swollen into indignation. The gap that had been left seemed cruel and unjust. I hated the place that had witnessed her death. A widow relative locally known as Bantrach Dhomhniull Roy (widow of Red Donald) took me into her home, where, like Elijah the Tishbite, I "did eat many days, and the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail." Unlike the son of the widow who received Elijah, however, the son of *my* widow was far from home. He had been locally known as "the reader," and had, fortunately for me, left many of his books behind, all of which were welcome. I soon became an omnivorous reader, desultory certainly, though in the circumstances that was scarcely a fault. The receptive faculty was developed in me at the expense of the creative, but patience and perseverance had cultivated the habit of taking trouble. Truly it was an invigorating time. There is no happier or healthier sensation for a young man than that of sailing on an even keel to knowledge and culture. In downright earnest I set about getting the best out of myself, and by some process which I cannot explain I found myself changed from an inveterate shirker of hard work into an earnest toiler. I began to realise how much of labour and

energy must be put into any task if it is to turn out well.

I had two idols in my rustic library. Sir Walter Scott's simplicity and genius in story-telling entirely wafted me away from Ness and from the island. Nay, I needed no food when I had him. He offered me, as it were, a spiritual sustenance, so that I forgot the earthly. But my great hero was Charles XII. of Sweden. His Life fortunately was among the books in the widow's cottage, and I devoured it. It made a deep impression upon me, and had an influence over all my future career. It was not the story of his wars which attracted me so much as the Spartan heroism of his character. He inspired me with the idea of triumphing over weakness and weariness and pain. To train the body to bear all manner of hardships, to bathe in ice or face the burning sun indifferently, to discipline the physical powers by gymnastics, to despise the niceties of food and drink, to make of the body, as it were, an instrument of finely tempered steel, and yet have it at the same time absolutely at the disposition of the mind—that seemed to me indeed a course of training worthy of a hero. I set myself to imitate him, and succeeded at least in so far as to be quite indifferent to the



circumstances of my personal environment, and to form the habit of never admitting difficulties to be disabilities. All this had its developing influence on a slow-growing brain, not of a singular vigour, but, of assimilative capacity.

After a few months of this silent education, I heard of a young man, a highly respectable and worthy fellow, who was about to leave Ness for the inhospitable regions of the Hudson Bay Company's territory. He had already spent five years there. My whole nature centred itself in one ardent longing that he should ask me to go with him. This wish was soon fulfilled, and in a few weeks I found myself sailing under the Cape Wrath lighthouse, *en route* to join the Company's ships in Hoy's Sound. I was but meagrely equipped with knowledge after all, and had scarcely even the education necessary for a commercial life. My little store of books consisted of the Bible; Johnson's Pocket Dictionary; Lennie's Grammar; a book on travels, presented by Mr. Roderick Morrison, banker, my Company's agent at Stornoway, and a distant relative of my mother's. I had, too, an important document—the Free Church minister's certificate of character, without which no person leaving the island could hope for any success either

in this world or that which is to come. I quote it in full :—

“ I hereby certify that the bearer, Roderick Campbell, is unmarried ” (at sixteen years of age !), “ is a bright lad, of more than ordinarily studious habits, and is of spotless character, as far as known to me.”

Signature and date duly appended.

Surely after that I could not but sing my *Te Deum Laudamus* and pass on at once to fame and fortune.

And thus the story of my adventures begins and that of my early days concludes, in which, though I have had much to say, the impatient reader may, perhaps, have thought there was but little to tell. Yet they have a value of their own, which shall not be easily forgotten by one who sighs and dreams of a strange past.

## CHAPTER IV.

### FROM LEWIS TO HUDSON BAY.

A SPIRIT of confidence on going into battle is either the most valuable or the most dangerous of weapons. Under certain conditions it is almost a guarantee of victory, that is while it acts as a tonic and braces nerve and muscle. The moment it has the effect of relaxing endeavour it becomes, alas! a mere presage of disaster. For me my new prospects meant a heavy weight upon my shrinking nerves and spirits. I felt that this venture was fraught with far-reaching consequences, as yet beyond my power to calculate, but which gave me much concern, chiefly when I thought of those I had left behind me at home. I must not disappoint them! But who can be confident of victory; especially of the kind of victory which enables a penniless boy to go out into the world to seek his fortune and return a rich man? Did it all depend on a mere chance? Surely not. The antithesis between good luck and ill is marked enough, but no

more so than that between virtue and vice, which need not be a matter of chance. There must be a sure foundation behind success, a foundation of moral courage, energy, character. The prayer of the Cromwellian divines, "that those that have zeal may have wisdom, and those that have wisdom may have zeal," supplied me with a motto.

These thoughts troubled me to the extent of feverish nights and morning headaches, but they were working slowly in the upbuilding of character, crude enough as yet and sorely buffeted about by storms of youthful conceit, discontentment, and prejudice against anything and almost everything. But I made up my mind that all the ability, the zeal, the singleness of purpose, I could command was to be concentrated in the effort to succeed. Yet I was conscious of being but an ordinary lad, and felt that my thoughts and hopes were possibly premature and over-sanguine, as certainly I found them liable to many changes. But, such as they were, they formed my faith and purpose, which, by God's help, I meant to maintain. I quoted to myself the verse from Whittier—

"I know not where these islands lift  
Their fronded palms in air;  
I only know I cannot drift  
Beyond His love and care."

As we sailed into the Sound of Hoy we found the Company's two ships the *Prince of Wales*, bound for York Factory, and the *Prince Rupert*, for Moose Factory, at anchor off the ancient town of Stromness, the most picturesque place in the Orkneys. It occupies the slope of a steep hill overlooking the strait which separates the mainland from Hoy Island, and consists chiefly of a sort of street, full of corners, and built at every conceivable angle. This curious cart-barrow way is a mile long, running parallel with the sea, and so tortuous as to admit of only a few yards being seen from any point. For the most part it is innocent of any distinction between road and footway. From this road many steep lanes ascend to the more open grounds above. Many small piers jut out into the sea, probably belonging to private houses. Thus these fortunate people can row their boats almost to their doors and step out within a few feet of the threshold. There is no need for concern about breakfast. A line cast out of the window will soon bring in a plentiful supply of sillocks. The sea washes away all refuse, and the seagulls do good service as scavengers for harbour, shore, and street. All the houses are, like Euclid's triangles, "similar and similarly situated." One

wonders how a resident finds his home. It is, indeed, a unique, primitive place. Among its most interesting curiosities is the *asterolepis* found by Hugh Miller near the Black Crag.

On Friday, 1st July, 1859, the anchors of the *Prince of Wales* (Captain Herd) were hauled aboard amid a chorus of sailors' "shanties," which seemed to give strength as well as impulse to the task of working rope and block. As we issued from the harbour before a gentle eastern breeze, we had Breckness on our starboard side, and on our port the cliffs of Hoy, rising to their imposing stature of a thousand feet. The Kame Rock, showing an imagined profile of Sir Walter Scott, is a little short of the extreme point of Hoy Head. Then comes in sight the "Old Man of Hoy," a rocky stack rising abruptly out of the sea, five hundred feet in height, and resembling a bishop with hat on. That point passed, we shot fairly into the dark blue waters of the North Atlantic Ocean.

"It is the mirror of the stars, where all  
Their hosts within the concave firmament,  
Gay marching to the music of the spheres,  
Can see themselves at once."

It was one of those enchanting evenings that can only be seen in these somewhat high latitudes. We had the tide with us, which

runs here at a furious rate from South Walls, Flotta, Hoy, and Longridge, and through Gutter Sound. Our pilot had returned to his boat, and amid a tremendous chorus of human voices, shouting and cheering, and much waving of hats and handkerchiefs, his rope was cast off, and we entered upon our period of isolation, with only the eternal stars in the blue vault of heaven for our companions and our guides.

By 9.30 P.M. the low sun had spread a purple glow on the water, with golden light on the barrels of the long heaving swells, and blue and green and mackerel shades in the hollows. The shadows of the masts and rigging and the never-to-be-furled sails rolled to and fro on the deck in the moonlight. Now and again a gentle, breathing swell; some three furlongs from trough to barrel, would quietly shoulder up a string of variously painted dories. They hung for an instant a wonderful fringe against the skyline, and the men pointed and hailed. Next moment the open mouths, waving arms, and bare chests disappeared, while another swell came up, showing an entirely new set of characters, for all the world like paper figures in a toy theatre.

There seemed no reason for retiring below, for there was no night. The sun's course was

clearly traceable from its disappearance below the horizon until its reappearance. But the shore was already far behind us, and as I turned my eyes upon its distant outline the blue hills quivered a moment on the horizon as if to bid us all a long farewell, and then sank into the bosom of the ocean. I turned, and went hastily to my berth.

In the morning the rocky stack of the island of Rona stood out of the glittering sea on our starboard quarter like a giant on stilts. Many a tale of this island I had drunk in almost with my mother's milk. Old Angus Gunn was full of its traditions. The sight of it brought back keen recollections of home, and when I turned and saw the Butt of Lewis rising far off out of the sea, a speck no bigger than a man's hand, I was forced once more to hurry out of sight. I was young, the youngest on board except the cabin boy and a baby passenger, and at sixteen a lad is young enough for tears and old enough to seek to hide them.

Later in the day, finding on board a young man from the extreme west of Lewis, I made a secret agreement with him that at dinner-time we should climb the mast to see if we could catch sight of the western point, Gallan Uig. We mounted, but only to be followed



by two sailors to tie us to the rigging till the grog penalty should be paid. Observing this, I seized a rope which stretched from the crosstrees to the deck, and throwing my legs round it I was soon on deck, while my companion was being fastened in mid-air. The incident afforded me an object lesson in the value of that quickness in emergency which has since stood me in good stead. Meanwhile, however, the deep rents and wounds in the palms of both my hands provided the ship's doctor with his first bit of professional practice for the voyage.

In addition to nearly fifty Company's servants, who were engaged for five years to serve at various points in its vast territory, there were three private passengers and a baby aboard. Of these three, two were natives of the Territory, one full blooded the other half bred, who had undergone a course of training, the one in divinity, the other in what appeared to be some form of occult alchemy. The other was an Orcadian lady, mother of the baby already mentioned. I wish I could write of our Helen as Homer did of her of Troy, yet ours was not Helen but Penelope, for she refused to accept the homage the whole ship was waiting to offer her. Very rarely would she appear on deck,

and when she did so she was attired in a plain but neat and becoming dress, and wore a heavy veil, as if she had just emerged from a Turkish harem. Yet so magical is the effect of a lady upon the male sex, that though hundreds of miles from shore, the mere sight of this one at once produced a perceptible change for the better in the looks of the whole ship's crew.

Two watches were kept on board, the Captain's and Mate's, according to custom. Each lasted four hours. The hours from 4 to 8 P.M. were divided into two dog watches, arranged so as to change the hours and allow the men to sleep to-day during the hours that they were on duty yesterday, and *vice versâ*. When the sun was seen and on our meridian, the captain and mate mounted the rigging with sextant and quadrant to take our bearings. A glance at the chronometers, faultlessly adjusted to Greenwich time, and a simple arithmetical calculation, were sufficient to discover within a mile our distance west and north from London.

Long after solan geese and gulls were left behind we were followed by two fulmar petrels (*Procellaria Glacialias*). Restlessly they followed us, now poised on the crest of a billow, now lost in its trough; eating not, sleeping not, pausing not, but journeying perpetually over

the waste of waters like homeless spirits lost in the glooms of eternity.

There is no more familiar and yet no more astonishing experience for the voyager upon the high seas than to study the new worlds, which in a few hours are created by a simple change of atmosphere. A storm is at hand, and Nature frowns at us from every side. She chills us with piercing winds, drenches us with pitiless rain and spray, threatens us from above with boding storm-clouds, glooms at us from black depths beneath. The storm which met our vessel was one of those which cannot easily be foreseen. It was preceded by a steady and persistent fall of the barometer, not by a sudden and alarming change. When it came, it came in full force. The scene made an ineffaceable impression on me—the mountainous sea, the high wind, the angry surge, the chaos and turmoil of whirling waters. The good barque shivered as each wave struck her, like an animal in the throes of death. Our horizon was but a ridge of foam-topped walls of water, raging tumultuously in a series of cataracts. When the ship dipped her bows she shipped tons of water, that came surging aft like the river Dell in spate. The heavens, the ship, and the ocean seemed mingled in a turmoil of war.

Yet through it all it was impossible to help being tickled at the ludicrous plight of the nervous and unseasoned recruits as they cautiously crept along the deck like timid skaters making their first attempt to keep a footing on smooth ice. On the whole, those who had to attend to the galley while the ship was tossing, and all the pots and pans were rolling anywhere and everywhere, into the fire and over the floor, had the worst of it. They might exclaim, with the Irishman writing to his friends at home, "I am writing this, stirring the soup with the one hand, putting on coals with the other, and holding on to a rope with my teeth."

For my own part, to crown all, I was suffering from that malady which no physician can cure, but which a sympathetic Irish sailor told me need not trouble me at all if I would simply "forget about it"! The sailors were enveloped in foul-weather gear, and kept on their oilskins and sou'-westers for thirty hours, yet I venture to say their discomfort was as nothing compared with mine.

At last, after two days of indescribable gloom, the atmospheric pressure was left behind, and once more we saw the heavens. The new glory of the air, of the sunlight, of the silver-shining sea, and of the sweet, blue sky, lifted us at a bound

from despair to rapture. The pessimist of yesterday was the optimist of this glorious morning. And, after all, it was only an affair of the atmosphere. Truly the whole art of existence might be said to lie in getting the right light upon things.

But now we were in the regions of icebergs. We were off Cape Farewell, Greenland, and from day to day sighted white, mountainous stacks, or others island-like, sailing slowly southward, drawn by the suction of the Gulf Stream into mid Atlantic, to become water again after an eternity of ice-reign. Some we saw towering hundreds of feet above water, and our veteran captain assured us that for every inch above there were fourteen below. Yet it was their age that most impressed me. The Pyramids of Egypt, beneath whose shadow fifty centuries have passed away, are children of a day beside these ice-bound pyramids of nature. When Moses was the servant of Pharaoh these mighty monuments were there, the relics of a hoary past, of another Egypt long since dead and forgotten. But for untold ages before their first stone was placed these frozen mountains lay huge and silent in their far-off unvisited solitudes.

On Monday, 1st August, a black speck

appeared, on the horizon, and the land of Columbus gradually raised itself out of the sea. It is hardly possible that Roderigo de Friand's cry of "Land looms up ahead!" could have caused more excitement in that crew three hundred and sixty-seven years before than the first sight of the barren and inhospitable island of Resolution now caused among us. A party of shipwrecked sailors on a raft could not have been more eager. Late in the day, after an exchange of courtesies with an ice floe, which gave the crew eight hours' hard pumping, the *Prince of Wales* entered Hudson's Straits, and found herself in the midst of an ice pack, which compelled her to proceed with more discretion and circumspection than had been necessary during the first three weeks of her voyage. Around us, as far as the eye could see, stretched fields of ice. Small lakes lay upon the floe of the purest and freshest water that ever man drank, and out of these the ship's tanks were refilled. I certainly found in the water tiny cray fishes and various insects moving about visibly enough, but there was no plant life, only swarms of animalculæ, chiefly infusoria and flagellata.

There we remained fixed in a frozen monotony. On the port bow the American coast,

Labrador, and Cape Chudleigh; on the star-board quarter, Cape Best, Resolution Island, Baffin Land, and the great Meta Incognita stretching northward towards the Pole. Round us lay masses of ice lying flat, standing on edge, piled upon each other in every imaginable position. On 15th August, my seventeenth birthday, I committed my second act of insubordination, tempted by these unfamiliar, yet alluring, surroundings. Accompanied by another lad, I stole overboard at dinner-time, resolved to reach the open sea. When we had got some distance from the ship we could not repress our exclamations at the grandeur of the scene. It astonished and amazed me beyond expression. No very fantastic imagination is needed to see spirits there at noonday. Yet it seems a perpetual image of death, so calm, so grand, as to compose the mind rather than to terrify it. Not a precipice, not a standing cliff of ice, but seems to reveal the finger of God, the Creator. These are scenes so beautiful and sublime that they might well awe an atheist into belief without other argument. I said to myself that the Eskimo who first chose to settle here was a man of no common genius, and that I, had I had the choice, would have been one of his first disciples.

After wandering over hummocky ice till the ship's masts had dwindled to the size of walking sticks, the "sublime and beautiful" suddenly made a rather untimely and unwelcome appearance in the form of a tremendous Polar bear making straight for us. My companion crept under a piece of ice for comfort and shelter. I took off my cloth jacket and a red comforter, which I had wound about my neck, and, waving these over my head, ran as fast as I could to meet the Arctic king. He immediately retreated, plunged into open water, and swam across a broad water lane to the ice floe beyond. We took to our heels, and reached the ship safely, only to be subjected to a kind of court-martial for desertion.

Every day our captain looked eagerly along the northern horizon on the chance of seeing traces of the *Fox*, which had sailed from Aberdeen two years before, under Captain McClintock, to search for Sir John Franklin and his crew, and of which nothing had since been heard. Captain Herd was also on the lookout for the chartered barque *Kitty*, which had left London for Hudson Bay on the 21st June. One day he fancied he saw smoke rising from a point approaching Frobisher Bay, but finding that his cannon shots remained unanswered, he wisely gave it up.



Again, a change of atmosphere had altered the whole face of the world. Under the new conditions the view from the "crow's nest" was indeed desolation itself. As far as the eye could reach the earth stretched out like a monstrous stiffened corpse. The land lay petrified and black as night under the murky fog. The only break in the grim monotony was afforded by a few scattered reddish mounds of what looked like slag, some ugly brown hills of burnt earth with sporadic snowdrifts scattered here and there in hollows and clefts. The barren dreary hills lay lonely, swathed in ugly robes of black mist, their lower slopes cold and bare above the sea-line, defying for ever the growth of vegetation. An oppressive silence weighed upon the scene. Nowhere did there appear to be a single vestige of life.

But it was not so, for suddenly along these dreary shores were seen signs of human presence. "Venerable to me is the hand, crooked, coarse—wherein, notwithstanding, lies a cunning virtue, indefeasibly royal as of the sceptre of this planet. Venerable, too, is their rugged face, all weather-tanned, besoiled, with its rude intelligence; for it is the face of a man living manlike," says Carlyle. Out of the unspeakable desolation men came to us. Dwarfed in

size, dark olive in colour, oily in appearance, here they live out their short nightless summer and long sunless winter in an isolation not always splendid. Yet they thrive, in their own way, under (significant fact!) the protection of no government but that of a kind Creator, and are as happy—ay, most likely happier than if trained in the wisdom of Aristotle or the world-conquering art of Alexander.

After a preliminary skirmish, paddling round the ship, their eyes rolling in frantic delight, this remnant of a prehistoric race sat at ease in the open hole in their kayaks. Each carried a harpoon line coiled on a tripod in front of him, a long spear on one side, and a dark skin bag inflated as a buoy in the narrow stern at his back. Their costume was, in its way, picturesque. Their long coarse black hair hung loose over their seal-skin jackets, which in turn overlapped their shaggy bear-skin breeches, and these again their seal-skin boots. Some of them were adorned with a tolerable sprinkling of beard and moustache. One, a chief, or head-man apparently, essayed to mount the ship's rigging, but his nerve failed, and, with heavy drops of oily sweat breaking on his brow, he returned to deck, almost paralysed and in a fainting fit. Their language

was altogether unintelligibly ugly, far beyond the understanding of any of us, whether Gordon from Lochinvar, London cockney, or Highlander from the Isles. Talk of pandemonium, or a certain place let loose! These are but pale figures with which to describe the sounds, and, as one powerful hoarse voice continued the discourse, like a dog yelping in the last stages of hydrophobia, many of us gave way to shrieks of laughter.

It is a difficult matter to say what ought to be done with these poor creatures. It seems evident that they must remain in perpetual isolation. A natural code of ethics and certain traditional rules of conduct to which they conform from one generation to another they no doubt possess, but they have no teacher and no religion; and as they paddled away I was filled with pity and regret for their uncouth, half-savage ignorance.

Three weary weeks we passed imprisoned in the ice. This is inevitable in such a strait, the passage being not only narrow but crooked and embarrassed with islands, though the only outlet from the largest inland sea in the world. At the cost, however, of a severe strain on both ship and hands, we made our way, after indescribable manœuvres, into the Bay. Our

only other adventure was a severe gale on the 27th, which brought with it from the north an immense field of ice floe, in which our good ship laboured heavily for fifteen hours, and which nearly carried two of her boats away.

We were now nearing Fort York, and the time had come to part from our Venus. Her husband was on board the little coasting schooner which we now saw approaching us from far out in the Bay. She was as charming and beautiful a creature as ever graced a fairy tale, and made a complete conquest of us all by her modesty, sweetness, and beauty. Not one of us but would have fought for her as the Trojans for Helen. We lost her, but honourably, delivering her to none other but the right man. And so bidding her farewell, we turned to the task of our own landing.

After manœuvring for many hours between red and black buoys, placed for our guidance by the happy man in whose care we left our Venus, we finally cast anchor in the "five-fathom hole," which forms the London Docks of Hudson's Bay. And soon the inevitable partings had to be faced, among a number of people so closely associated for a time, and probably never to meet again on earth. As I turned away to descend into the boat below

I realised, as never before, the meaning and the beauty of the familiar words: "And may the love of God that passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ."

Thus, with a blessing in my heart and farewells on my lips, I turned with thrilling nerves for the first sight of my adopted land, which, truly, appears, on the horizon, low, swampy, and inhospitable, to prove something of an El Dorado for the new recruits, who will soon be scattered, broadcast, over its vast surface, to spy out its outward worth, like Caleb and Joshua of old. But! —

## CHAPTER V.

### FORT YORK IN 1859.

WRITERS on uncivilised countries are strongly tempted to write in a sensational and highly coloured style. I feel the temptation, but fling it from me at the outset, being resolved to confine myself to naked truths, though they should consume me. So to my tale.

Infant Babylon on the Euphrates, infant Nineveh on the Tigris, infant Rome on the Tiber, infant London on the Thames, and infant Fort York on the Hayes River! All have their beginning. Some have had their ending. I do not mean to imply a prophecy that Fort York shall yet rule the world. Yet the smallness of its beginning would not prevent even that. There was no pomp or ceremony to celebrate our arrival. No pliant burgo-master, with golden keys on velvet cushion, came forth to welcome us; no white-clad virgins sang in chorus as we filed into this square wood-built fort. We were greeted only by a host of contemptible husky dogs, growling,

snarling, and yelping in breathless and angry protest.

How one's eyes are astonished and delighted with novelty when first one touches a foreign soil ! The ugly faces of the Indians, redeemed by lustrous eyes ; the children, gaily bedizened in many colours ; the old witch-like women, with bronzed, shrivelled parchment for skin, carrying their children strapped to their backs, were curious and interesting sights to me. The young men and women were in gaudy array, the former with beaded fire-bags, gay scarlet sashes, leggings girt below the knees with beaded garters to match, and moccasins elaborately embroidered ; the latter in short coloured skirts, revealing embroidered leggings with moccasins of white cariboo skin, beautifully worked with flower patterns in beads, silk thread, moosehair, and porcupine quills dyed in many colours. All these things told me I was far from Ness.

Yet I felt at home in it, for it was but the realisation of my early dreams. The descriptions of these very things had carried me to fairyland. But at the best I had scarcely expected that the dreams were to come so entirely true. I was full of hope and earnest purpose, resolved to be diligent in business,

and to rise, if will and resolution could bring it about, to a much higher position in the Company's service.

The first difficulty was the languages. As the reader knows by this time, I had no *alma mater* to feed me with the bread of knowledge in my youth. Perhaps it was as well. I think sometimes there are, after all, too many roads to learning, too many devices to save the learner's pains, too many aids to indolence. Why, are there not divines who seriously urge that some of the difficulties in St. Paul's Epistles are deliberately introduced to try the faith of those who should come after—nuts for the future to try its teeth on? Difficulties, I had already decided, should never deter me. Accordingly, on 3rd September, 1859, I recorded a resolution to have learned within a year from that date the various Indian languages in use in my adopted country. A good resolution, than which nothing is better except a good will to maintain it.

The old fort, three miles off, has remained in ruins ever since it was captured and destroyed by the French admiral La Perouse in 1782. The new fort, or main factory building, was in the form of a square, with a courtyard in the centre. In the middle there stood a very high



"look-out," bearing in huge letters the initials "H. B. C."—"Here Before Christ," as we used to interpret them. The front centre of the building was three storeys high, the other portion two storeys. On one side ran a long summer-house, which was used to accommodate the officers from the inland posts when they paid their annual visits to bring up furs and take back goods. All round the square there were store-rooms, meat-houses, shops, trading-houses, provision stores, coopers', tinsmiths', and blacksmiths' shops, and the doctor's, clergyman's, and other houses. In front of the factory buildings was the only bit of arable ground on the whole coast-line. It was called "The Gardens," and was divided by two main walks leading from the esplanade to the river-bank. Potatoes and turnips were the principal produce of these gardens, and these grew fairly well considering the unkindly latitude. The whole fort was surrounded for protection by high palisades. Outside was the powder magazine, also enclosed within high palisades, and so was the graveyard hard by. Upon one gravestone I read the following inscription: "Sacred to the memory of Wm. Sinclair, Esq., Chief Factor, Honble. Hudson's Bay Coy. Service, who died 21st April, 1818, aged 52. 'Behold, Thou

hast made my days as an handbreadth, and my age as nothing before Thee. Verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity.' " Two inscriptions I noticed written in Cree, and on that account they attracted a little attention, but beyond these there was nothing particularly interesting.

The Church Missionary Society had an indefatigable agent working amongst the natives. A number of text-books were already printed in the Cree language. The same syllabic characters were used as in teaching Chippewayan, and the children were taught in Cree to read and write and apply the rudiments of arithmetic. The Indian village was half a mile from the fort, and contained about three hundred inhabitants, living some of them in log cabins, but most in pole-tents. The village was literally alive with children and dogs, which seemed to be engaged in a perpetual rivalry as to which should make most noise. When I paid my first visit the women were standing about chatting and talking to each other with great volubility, occasionally casting a glance at me, or at the row of infants behind them—a dozen or so standing bolt upright in their tightly laced cradles. Each wore a blanket, shawl-fashion, and had a coloured

handkerchief on her head and embroidered moccasins on her feet.

A curious object in the village was the large day oven, in which baking was done once a week for the whole of the inhabitants together. The oven was heated, and each woman brought her own dough ready for firing. The forty or fifty pans were put in, and when the bread was ready, the squaws selected their respective loaves and carried them away rejoicing. The oven was built for them by the Company. The Company and the Indians were mutually helpful, and their labours complemented each other, though the latter had a smaller share of the "unearned increment."

At the time of the year when I arrived, there were generally hundreds of inland Indians, mongrels, and Metis at the fort, who were engaged for the trip to work in the boats. They were rationed every morning at no small expense on salted geese and pemmican. The latter was very sustaining, and although it contained no salt, it was so prepared by the Indians of the plains as to keep good for generations. It consisted of sun-dried buffalo beef, pounded and put in a raw hide bag of buffalo skin, with buffalo fat boiled and poured over the whole.

These curiously mixed peoples, from the far-away plains of the Saskatchewan, English, Swan, Red, and Rainy Rivers, and Cumberland and Norway House districts, passed away the time in sleeping and eating and gambling, and in conjuring to their hearts' content. They seemed quite at home in the occult art, and were experts of no mean ability in its mysterious wiles. I remember the conjurer's being asked to give information regarding the safety of Captain L. McClintock and his crew, already lost for two years. He undertook the task with the greatest air of confidence, and declared them to be safe, professing to see them at that moment working their way out of the last ice floe on the way home. In the course of his interview with dark spirits far beyond our ken, he certainly made his small tent shake terrifically, and the deafening shrieks and shoutings that issued from it were enough to wake the dumb gods of the prophets of Baal. The gambler played his game openly, except for his hands, which were carefully hid under his blanket. But he too made a dreadful noise, toning it down gradually, however, till the sound vanished as if in the last convulsion of death. All the time he kept bowing like a Chinese mandarin, but in a stiff,

unnatural fashion, suggestive of a galvanised mummy.

The local medicine-man was of an inquiring disposition, ever striving to obtain such knowledge of natural phenomena as might aid him in his occult labours. He was quite uninstructed, however, and had no knowledge of minerals, and only a general acquaintance with the properties of medicinal herbs and certain roots and animal productions. Since Zadkiel (or was it Old Moore?) hit the bull's-eye, thanks to the misapprehension of a subordinate, by predicting snow in harvest-time, any sufficiently audacious weather prophet has been tolerably sure of an attentive hearing.

Our local great man, Mes-Kee, Ke, Waynan, managed to unite with herb knowledge a faculty of observing weather signs, and so to foresee coming changes and win for himself the reputation of being able to command rain or sunshine. He had to invent and think out a character for the Manitos—the supernatural beings he believed in—so as to be able to inform his less gifted neighbours of their deeds in the dark world in which they dwelt. He maintained all ceremony, and when seeking to propitiate the spirits he was clothed in such elaborate paraphernalia as would enable him

to meet with all grace the eyes of those spirits with whom he had to do. In any other garment than that which he himself designed, his efforts to persuade them might be fruitless. His headgear was made from the varying abundance of the feathered tribes of the air; his overall cloak was a variegated masterpiece, surpassing Joseph's coat of many colours; his feet and legs were a mass of dyed quills of all the hues of the rainbow. So that, though he charged no fee, his personal well-being was amply secured by these and other gifts. It is only fair to say that, at least in one case, this "medicine-man" cured a case after the fort doctor had given up. A man had been down with scurvy, which had developed into rheumatic gout. "Life is life; a life for a life," exclaimed the son of Nature, and promptly ordered the sick man to get a bullock, to shoot it through the head, and to have the inside at once removed. Then he placed his patient, naked as he was born, inside the animal, leaving out only his head, and kept him there till he was well-nigh dead. Having undergone such a process of half-cooking, the man promptly recovered, and when I saw him enjoyed the best of health, and was never tired of repeating the unique experience. Whether

this crude scientist regarded the causes of his successes (weather included) as personal or impersonal, I was unable to find out ; but the subject of his thoughts and speculations was the same as that of his brother medicine-men in Asia and Africa, and his methods not very unlike.

These three outstanding men I have been able to sketch only very lightly. All this part of my life was very wonderful to me, and the recollection of it is vivid still. But to describe it as it impressed me then—I so young and ardent, my surroundings so new and strange—would demand a pen of fire dipped in the dyes of the rainbow.

The question suggests itself how and whence these nomad tribes reached and made their home in a land so uninviting. There are many points which showed a strong comparison with Jew and gipsy. Like them, they have been driven from their first home, and, like them, they have maintained even in dispersion, through a certain proud reserve and isolation of character, if not by the special "blessing" of Providence, their individuality and separate existence as a race. Like them, they are accused of practising the "dark arts," of holding intercourse with the Evil One, of cannibalism or human sacrifice.

There are advantages in this roaming life which at one time or another have attracted most of us. The open-air existence, the constant change of scene, the easy indolence, the delightful freedom from inhabited house duty and similar exactions of civilisation, seem more than enough to outweigh the disabilities of an Ishmaelism whose hand, potentially at least, is against every man's. This last characteristic was not noticeable in my Indian friends. They were neither fiery nor quarrelsome, perhaps by the influence and habit of the repressive North.

The pioneer work in Arctic exploration has been done in great part by our own countrymen. In commercial enterprise Scotsmen have taken the lead. The prosperity of Hudson's Bay and its companies and territories is due to brave men from north of the Tweed. Scottish caution is generally sure-footed. It built up an East Indian empire, and for two hundred years, having obtained a charter from Charles II. in 1669, it began to build up this frozen dominion in the North, with Sir George Simpson at its head, and seven-eighths of its officers Scotsmen. What a number of Scottish names can be found scattered broadcast over the country, from British Columbia and Alaska on the



Pacific side to Labrador and Ungava on the Atlantic, and to the United States boundary on the south, a territory so vast that it could drown Europe in its fresh-water lakes—Andersons, Christies, Baillies, Barnstones, Colvilles, Campbells, Douglasses, Finlaysons, Frasers, Grahames, Isbisters, Kennedys, Mathesons, McFarlanes, McKays, McDougalls, McGillivrays, McDonalds, McKenzies, Rosses, and Sinclairs! The story of trading enterprise and discovery in the North-West reads like a muster-roll of the clans. As I took my humble place in the service to which I was bound that autumn of 1859, I told myself proudly that I belonged to the land of Bruce and Wallace, of Knox, of Burns, of Chalmers and Carlyle; and though I might never see her again, I gloried in thinking that I, too, was her son.

## CHAPTER VI.

### FORT YORK TO THE RED RIVER OF THE NORTH.

Nor one of the new recruits had the smallest idea in what part of the vast territory his lot was to be cast. I waited patiently, finding enough to interest me in the enormous piles of goods that lay on the river-bank, ready for transference to the inland boats—sufficient witness to the commercial importance of Fort York, the brain and heart of the whole territory. At last the die was cast, and my destination fixed, nine hundred miles away, southward happily, on the Red River. This was the most civilised part of the territory, and friends and foes alike pronounced me lucky. I myself was not specially enthusiastic, being conscious of a preference for savagery over civilisation, a preference supported by distinguished authority, since Rousseau held that the cultivation of the arts and sciences had not contributed to the purification of morals. What weighed most heavily on my mind was the long distance from the sea.

Born on the verge of the Atlantic, the son of a race of sea-people, I had a strong love for the salt ocean, and as no time was fixed for my return, I felt that the Greek kalends might arrive, nay the next glacial period be upon us, before I again tasted its briny flavour.

Be that as it might, however, I soon found myself in the stern of a boat, hoisting the lug sail before a strong and cold north-east wind and a stronger tide, running eight miles an hour into the thorax of the Hayes River. My crew were truly a promiscuous lot—Metis, mongrels, and Indians. They were seven in number, three great and four small. Two Metis and an Indian were of extraordinary size, sons of Anak, while the balance were mongrels of the tiniest stature possible. All alike seemed in a state of torpor, suffering from fatigue after heavy tippling. Resolved either to increase or decrease the symptoms, I handed over to them my whole allowance of grog for the nine hundred miles. Their appreciation was amusing in its volubility. Indian and English tongues were mingled indiscriminately in praise of the gift and the giver.

Cape Tatnam was the last I saw of the sea coast. The boat sailed up river on the

bosom of the tide, and when its force was no longer felt we put ashore for the night. As the tide turned and the sea returned to its bed, I had a sense of losing a friend. I said farewell to it sadly, and asked myself when I should see it again. My first night at the camp-fire under the canopy of heaven was truly a strange one, a mixture of hope and of fear, of joy and of doubt. But I had learned well the lessons of home, and God was my mainstay. My companions betook themselves early and with enthusiasm to the grog gift. Nay, they "broached the admiral" too, which made up fully two-thirds of our cargo, in their eagerness to replenish the virtues of my gift and keep up the bout. They fought each other like tigers, tearing their clothes to rags, and dragging handfuls of hair from thick-grown heads that never had known a comb. It goes without saying that they anathematised each other in a babel of tongues. Then their mood changed, and I could hear the half-muttering of the native "Auld Lang Syne," with its rousing "wullywachts" and fraternal grasping of hands. By morning light it was all over, and our guide called out in a species of hawking voice, with power of sorts like the blast of Roderick Dhu's horn, "Win-ish-kaa!

win-ish-kaa ! Ash a keeish ee-gaw "—" Wake ! wake ! Already daylight." The conquest of one language by another is always an interesting study, and one in which I was to be absorbed henceforth. The difficulties promised to be great, chiefly that of distinguishing what was really germane to the tongue I was studying and what foreign. But I could only persevere. Every passing breath is said to add something to the stability of a coral reef. Why should not it be so with me ? Every phrase overheard by chance might add something to my knowledge.

After a hurried repast of half-baked bread and raw pemmican, four of the most motley specimens of humanity ever seen jumped ashore to tow us up stream. They wore leather straps around their shoulders, to which were attached five hundred feet of tracking line. The other end of the line was made fast to the fore-shoulder of our boat. Our craft was of five tons burden, and was heading a current of six miles an hour on the average, so that our mongrel friends' work was no sinecure. They walked by the water's edge, one after the other, with heads bent in an attitude suggestive of deep sorrow, with long necks stretched out gooselike and bent backs, thus putting forth every particle of

strength that Nature had bestowed upon them. Indeed, to do them justice, they needed no urging, being every one more eager than another to finish the task and get back home again. Thus we proceeded up stream day by day, with no change in the programme, except here and there where the current got slack, and the amber water trickled drowsily over the exquisite pebbles. The physical aspect of the country improved as we advanced. Instead of the dwarf shrub brush growing, or trying to grow, on the low coast lands, we found good-sized trees of poplar, birch, and pine. The sun now set among the foliage of trees. In these high latitudes he appears to the careless eye to be still moving royal in the heavens as if in the summer solstice, although he is nearly on the equator. On the night of 12th September the harvest moon was full, although where I was there was no harvest to gather in. I fell asleep by its light. There was no dressing or undressing, nor had my bedroom any roof but the canopy of God's dwelling-place. After the sweet sound sleep of my age and race, I awoke to a scene of unearthly beauty. It was four o'clock. The great moon, in her splendid maturity, rode royally in the far west. Mercury sparkled, and Venus shone soft and clear.

Jupiter blazed on the meridian, Mars and Saturn in attendance; and remote Uranus stood in the constellation of the Bull. The whole camp lay in dead sleep. By-and-by red and white streaks began to spread themselves across the eastern sky, and soon I saw our good guide standing on the river bank, stretching his neck not unlike our cockerel at home, and in another minute the strident voice was again shouting its hoarse "Win-ish-kaa!" to the camp. The streaks of light in the east grew brighter, heralding the rising of the sun, and the natives were already in harness. We were travelling just then through a deep rocky gorge, running due east and west, and the moon's soft light played in the depths with strange, fantastic effect. I shall always remember that morning, the golden sun coming up behind me, the silver moon going down in front, both so serene, so majestic, so far away, and between and beneath them four human mongrels in harness, holding on their course with the tenacity of grim death, hauling a five-ton cargo boat against a particularly strong and trying current.

I had begun to understand my companions much better by this time, although our conversation was carried on through an interpreter in broken Indian and sorely abused and badly

fractured English. I must admit that as yet two-thirds of my Indian vocabulary were exhausted in "No" and "Yes."

The mosquitoes and their second cousins the sand flies were simply intolerable in their eager thirst for the white man's blood. When I lay down at night I fancied that the oblivion of sleep would deliver me from the torment of their designing songs and sharp stings. But no, they attacked me with a voracity that made me believe I was the first tit-bit that had come their way since the hour of their insect birth. The natives did not seem to mind the plague at all. Whether they, through custom, are less sensitive than we are, whether their blood is not so sweet, or whether the creatures have pity on their countrymen, I know not, but the fact remains, they are not so vicious by half when there are no white men about.

Day by day I was more overcome by the mystery of our loneliness. We passed by no mansions, no castles, no ancient monasteries, no towns, no ruins. We were alone, alone.

Speaking of this country, it has been said, "The most travelled of those who behold the extent and variety of its scenic magnificence, and whose souls are open to such appeals of Nature, will readily admit that they have never



seen the like of it, and that nothing they ever saw impressed them so deeply. They will be struck first with the vastness and unknown character of the region traversed. Imagine six hundred thousand square miles of wilderness, of which probably less than a twentieth part has as yet been trodden by human beings. The merest specks of white and aboriginal settlements exist on the shores and river banks, aggregating a few thousands in population. Hundreds of miles of shore line are passed without discovering any sign of life but the waterfowl and the numerous bald-headed eagles perching on tree-tops. The contemplation of the solemn solitude of this great primeval realm is truly awe-inspiring."

I was constantly reminded of the hummocky ice-field in the straits, only on a larger scale, in the tumbled masses of rocks upon rocks. Much mineral wealth might be hidden there, but no science could ever develop any agricultural capability.

From night to night the stars shone with greater and greater brilliancy. A blush of lovely light, in shape like an outspread fan, stretched upwards from the horizon, and made a pathway through the stars. That light borders the sun's path for millions of miles.

I watched in vain for it in the early part of the night, possibly because during the coming months the sun's track would be low down near the horizon. This beautiful northern sky, with its sparkling millions of stars, was to me the one great joy of my journey. I fancied them alive and looking at me with radiant glances, as if inviting me to join them in their unknown realms.

Beneath these stars we passed now and again a lonely family, under birch-bark covered tent. With them, in a primitive way, was "the sacred mother of humanity." They were, indeed, sinless, uncontaminated by fraud and deceit, moving free and unconscious in the royalty of nature. Surely these souls that sail thus before a fair wind across the ocean of life must needs be happy. But my Scottish love of the "abstract" is threatening me again. I leave the perilous precincts of ethnology, and return to my tale.

My diary, kept a secret from all, now became a real difficulty. The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. On the day we entered the straits, when we were so severely bombarded by an ice-pack, an exceptionally vigorous bump threw me forcibly down on the deck, my hand under me. It got rather badly

hurt, and was now beginning to fester. The excruciating pain added considerably to the pessimism of my mood, full of fear for the future and longings after what was left behind. One day, while the usual midday meal was being prepared at the bottom of a high hill, I was told that from its top the waters of Hudson's Bay could be seen clearly. The word was enough. Dinnerless and maimed, I set out to have a last look at the sea. The ascent was tedious, steep, and long, but I reached the summit at last, only, alas! to be disappointed. Suddenly, however, I came upon something that takes me back to paleolithic man and the eras before the Deluge: running into the mossy rocky hill a long cave, out of which black smoke was eddying, but not a human face was to be seen. Probably the story was an Indian legend. Still the view was grand. Far as the eye could reach hills and valleys rose and fell in endless, irregular sequence. To see such an extent of land unbordered by the sea was a new experience to me—an islander. The descent was accomplished with many slips and scrambles, many alarms and anxieties. I reached my starting-point with a well-developed appetite, to find neither dinner nor boat awaiting my return.

I sat on a stone at the water's edge in wondering, disconsolate amazement, ending at last in hopeless discouragement and tears. My stock of hot, wet grief seemed inexhaustible. Fear fastened upon me like a leech. I was in despair. How small I felt in this vast wilderness, alone. How longingly I thought of my motley crew of companions; how I would have welcomed them now, formidable as they had hitherto appeared to me. It was beginning to snow, too. Cold and hunger were seizing on my shivering frame, no fire, no food, no night-wraps to keep life in for even twenty-four hours. I thought of my immortal countryman Alexander Selkirk, and found my case worse than his. He at least was in the tropics, not frozen in the cold regions of the Arctic. This was my third misadventure since I entered the service, and seemed likely to be the last—first the escapade on the mast, then the flight over the ice and adventure with the bear, and now the loss of my boat and, as appeared likely, death from cold and starvation. While these gloomy forebodings filled my mind, and my body shuddered with pain, I found it difficult to collect sufficient presence of mind to consider the position practically. But as I turned I observed a board standing

upright. The side next the river was crossed and recrossed by black streaks of charcoal. This was done recently, and must surely mean something. But what? Suddenly a boat glided into view, coming steadily up stream. It made straight for the isolated spot where I stood trembling. In a few moments all was well, and it was explained to me that it was a very usual thing on these river journeys to leave a man ashore to make an oar or mast, or for some similar purpose, trusting to his being picked up by the following boat, whose crew recognised the charcoal-marked board as a signal to stop.

Soon after this we left the Hayës and Hill Rivers behind us and emerged into Knee Lake. Here at last the poor fellows had a rest, as the lug-sail was well filled by a fine north wind, which drove us through the water at a great rate. This lake lies on a plateau, moderately elevated above the sea, and around its shores are isolated hills and ridges of no great height. At night I slept on the ground upon a bed made of the tips of boughs of the balsam fir laid in regular order like slates on a roof, the stem ends sloping downwards—a springy and fragrant couch, which might soothe even a festering hand to sleep.

Our journey now assumed a new phase.

Our progress up stream was checked by falls and rapids, most of which consisted of a series of short chutes, having a descent of from fifteen to sixty feet, with intervals of smooth water between. The passage between these and the nearest bays of two neighbouring lakes was made by the "portages," or trails, which have existed from time immemorial. The cargoes were carried on the backs of *voyageurs*. Except the spirit puncheons, everything was in the form of handy packages, so that the transfer was quickly made. The ordinary portage load for a man was two hundred pounds, and it was held in place upon his back by means of a pack strap or sling, the loop of which was placed round the forehead. With such loads they ran at full speed from water to water, no matter what the distance. It amused me to see them each with his two hundred pounds on his back running like Tam o' Shanter's mare pursued by the devil.

Here I had my first chance of examining the Indian canoe. Certainly the white man has invented nothing to equal it for the purpose for which it is made. It is light and, I have been told, durable. It is still constructed just as in the prehistoric days before the white man came. It is made of the rind of the canoe-

birch tree, which when mature is tough and lasting, and very much resembles tanned leather. The inner side is turned out to form the bottom, and the different sheets are sewn together by long split roots of the spruce, which are also used to sew the bark to the gunwale. All is lined inside by long strips of cedar, split very thin, placed lengthwise, and held in position by eight semicircular ribs of cedar set closely together, their ends being cleverly caught between the inner side of the bark and the gunwale. Seams are carefully made tight by the gum of any coniferous tree. A canoe is from ten to twenty feet long, and so equipped, with a flintlock gun and powder and shot, an Indian can traverse the continent from ocean to ocean without other aid.

At last we arrived at the first of the inland posts, Oxford House. The lake of that name, upon which it stood, abounded in fish: white-fish, sturgeon, pike, pickerel, gold-eyes, ling-sucker, and chub. The last-named were called *awaadoosie*, "stone-carriers," by the Indians, from their habit of collecting stones and gravel, weighing from an ounce to over a pound, and depositing these in a heap at the bottom of a river as a suitable place for laying and hatching their eggs. The stones are of course much

lighter under water, and the fish are thus able to carry them in their mouths in accordance with Nature's curious arrangement. Fur-bearing animals were abundant in the neighbourhood: the moose and cariboo deer, and also the black bear, beaver, musk-rat, porcupine, lynx, wolverine, otter, skunk, fisher, marten, mink-fox, and wolf. Birds of passage were likewise numerous, many species of ducks, geese, swans, and cranes being summer visitors in countless numbers to these northern regions, and the natives laid in a large supply (their harvest home) for winter and spring consumption. With them hunting was, indeed, reduced to a fine art. Like Solomon of old, they might be said to speak the language of birds and beasts. The effect of their imitative cries was simply magical. I have seen flocks flying southward wheel round at the sound and light upon their heads only to be fired at. Nor did they learn by experience, but returned again and again when the cry was repeated, an easy prey. The native has many curious arts, mysterious to us, but useful to himself. Who else could build a campfire as he does? He arranges it high in a semicircle, and when it is lighted there is heat enough not merely to keep one comfortable, but to roast an ox.



Beyond Oxford House our route lay by rivers, reservoirs, and creeks in a bewildering series of ugly steep gradients and sharp curves. Out and in among the hills the road wound like a great snake. Soon we came to a wonderful specimen of Nature's engineering, the most magnificent bit of wild scenery I had as yet looked upon in my adopted country. The place was called "Hell's Gate," and did, indeed, suggest demonic craft. I cannot speak of the waterfalls. The mere recollection of them silences me; the sight of them appalled me. I saw in what I can only describe as a great glen between mountain ranges a group of hills and hillocks. Far away on one side a range of hills formed one rampart, and the highlands on the other side formed the other. Miles of distance separated the two. Between them other hills arose, some wooded, some rocky and precipitous, all picturesque enough to delight a painter's eye. In the deep centre of the glen was cut the perpendicular gorge. I looked over the edge into the foaming cauldron below with awe. I could mark the mad whirl of the waters and stand in the very vortex of its vapoury columns, half stupefied by its deafening roar. At its verge the waters were heaving and eddying and fretting as if reluctant to make the dreadful

plunge, and up from beneath rushed the dense vapour. As I stood amazed a half-breed approached me and said; "Boy, what are you looking at? Don't you think this to be the last piece of the world that God created?" "No, friend," I said; "I think it to be the first, for, truly, it is rough enough to be the work of an apprentice." He laughed himself into an ecstasy.

We continued our way. The famous march over the Little St. Bernard was nothing to this. Hannibal and his hosts would scarcely have conquered it. To me it seemed the very abomination of desolation upon the earth.

Streams, not one, but many, had to be traversed. Portages became legion, their names unpronounceable by human lips. Our *voyageurs* were still with us, and we were surrounded by an atmosphere of supplications not altogether gloomy, because pierced by persistent rays of hope, but still foggy enough, for the natives, consumed by home-sickness, kept pleading and craving for admission to the upper country lakes. With all their strength they used to toil and struggle and persevere to attain this end and have their task finished before there was a risk of being "frozen in," as often enough happened. Instinct I found to be

their chief guide and strongest trait. Arguments led nowhere in native affairs, but all were active and alert in fleeing from *Kee-way-tin*, the north wind. They had all the Arctic legends by heart. They could tell you where the great volcano blazed that would burn the whole earth quick, where there was an open sea of incongruous temperature, and where might be discovered the great race of giants, twenty feet high. They greatly feared this race, who dwelt in silence at the top of the earth, and whose breath was *Kee-way-tin*, the north wind. They had strange ideas lost in unintelligible metaphor, but they were mostly honest, inoffensive people, with many kindly and polite instincts that might put to shame many more civilised.

Of the rest of our portages I shall say nothing. The only grudge I nurse against them is their association with a nightly and distressing rendering of Indian songs, wordless and tuneless, but wailing continuously on five treble notes. I never knew whether it was a song of joy or of lamentation, but there is no chant, be it ever so dolorous, that could have so effectually expressed, as it seemed to me, the depths of misery.

We entered the Echamowash, so called by

the natives from its still waters and smooth, canal-like course. Yet even there we were not free from troubles, barriers having been built across it by many a colony of beavers, seeking to protect their homes. These elicited many oaths from their irate countrymen. It seemed intolerable to have progress retarded by these pigmies, which, like our fairies at home, though with much more reality, slept all day and worked mischief all night. Beavers' houses and villages are the most wonderful contrivances. I know of no more marvellous example of instinct than they afford. They fell a tree as quickly as a man could do it, and cut it with their teeth into billets, which they carry under water and fix to the bottom of the river, plastering them down with mud till they dam the water up to a depth which will obviate the risk of freezing. They divide the house into rooms, and prepare hard by, at the bottom of the river, a supply of food exactly sufficient for the period that the river will be under ice and snow. Truly a wonderful race, on whose accomplishments I have no space here to dwell.

We were now, after five hundred miles of the most wonderful waterway in the world, on a level plateau, the first terrace of any noticeable elevation above the Bay. It offers little oppor-

tunity for cultivation, being not only rocky, broken, and uneven, but hampered with climatic disadvantages which can never be wholly obviated. These are not the consequence of high latitude, that being only from  $54^{\circ} 13'$  to  $59^{\circ} 3'$ , but of its central and isolated position, far from the mellowing influences of the ocean. The Bay, itself scarcely ever free from ice, which floats in upon it continually by Fisher's Strait and Rowe's Welcome from Fox Channel, has little help to offer in softening the atmosphere. The Labrador peninsula shuts it out from the beneficial influence of the Atlantic, and the Alaska Territory acts as a check to the balmy breezes of the Pacific, which might have softened the hearts of the stony hummocks.

Taking as centre the important inland post which we had now reached, Norway House, on the north-east end of Lake Winnipeg, the northern headquarters of my Company and a spot almost exactly half-way between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, I should like to offer my younger readers some account of the different tribes that roam over this vast territory, east, west, north, and south. The aborigines of this region undoubtedly belong to the Northern Cree branch of the wide-spread Ojibway or

Cree stock. This tribe, divided into twenty-five branches under as many different names, extended, at the time of which I write, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. On the west side of Hudson's Bay the Chippewayan tribe intervened, who also came in contact with the Eskimos of the Arctic. But all, except the last-named, were descendants of the original Cree stock, which was the largest of the Lenni-Lennappe family in North America, the Chippewayan, Floridean, and Iroquois being next. The Cree was also a plain Indian, and as such very superior to his brethren in the North, who were designated "wood Crees," and who spread themselves from sea to sea in various tribes, speaking strange dialects, called collectively the Quesnes or Montagnais. Besides these there were the Yellow Knives, Dog Ribs, Slaveys, Hares, Cariboo-Eaters, and the Loucheux, on the Mackenzie River, with sharp features and almond-shaped black eyes, these the most intelligent of all, and possessing a more distinct and characteristic language. Missionaries had reached nearly all the tribes, using as centres my Company's various posts, which were scattered throughout the length and breadth of its limitless territories. Their efforts, happily, had been rewarded by at least

the outward acceptance of their doctrine by a very large number of the aborigines who came into the posts to trade. The followers of good John Wesley had penetrated thus far in their search for souls. He it was who, with indefatigable zeal, preached the gospel three years in America to native tribes, and who boldly told his bishop that henceforth the world was his parish. The Church Missionary Society, of which I have already spoken, had many missions in the land, and the Oblate Fathers, before either of these, had worked their way in quest of souls from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the far-off Rocky Mountains, and the Athabasca and Mackenzie Rivers. On the whole, it may be said that sixty per cent. of the converts were Roman Catholics, the other forty Protestants. The most tangible evidence of their work and influence so far was the suppression of polygamy and incest. The Indians themselves had no form of defined worship—if they had any religion it was only one of fear. They were ever propitiating the evil spirits, the demons of their dreams, the imaginary enemies of the woods, rivers, and lakes. Evidence of this came before me on the coast, in the medicine-men, who burned old shoes, leggings, broken snow-shoes, which had been hung up as peace

sacrifices, in order to avert bad luck in hunting, or head winds in voyages. I never failed to note the predominant note of avarice—human nature all over—stronger even than the superstition, as was shown by the worthless character of the offerings. By tradition they were inclined to an inferior species of totemism, although no religious ceremony was ever attached to its acceptance. Thus any animal or bird dreamed of was taken as the dreamer's token. These old superstitions and inborn notions of fatalism are long of dying. They were very willing—on receiving a trifle—to conform to the ceremonies of the new religion, but little true Christianity seemed to have been developed. Their change, as far as I could judge, was one of method rather than of heart, and, indeed, in this one is tempted to ask whether civilisation can cast a stone at them. But they had little relish for civilisation, and if they were induced to take a step forward they were very ready to back out of it. Female children were killed at birth by some parents. Others allowed them to live simply to become beasts of burden. Old people were frequently strangled when no longer able to seek their own living, or left behind to starve when the family moved to another spot.



Nor was the custom extinct for men openly to exchange wives for longer or shorter periods. In consequence, the number of virtuous girls was small ; and wise was indeed that son who knew his father in this vale of unconventionality. Chastity was regarded as a virtue to be honoured in the breach rather than in the observance. Fidelity by no means seemed essential to the happiness of wedded life, and he was happiest who escaped the trap altogether. The dead, in many tribes, were still seen swinging in trees, where the cold winds of heaven rocked them in their eternal sleep ; others threw them into shallow graves, with gun, ammunition, tea and tobacco, for the mysterious journey, and there the voracious wolverine guarded them by day, to feed on them by night. A traditional notion of a future life they had, somewhat after this fashion :—

Two men die, one honest, one unscrupulous. Each soul enters a canoe and sails into a large lake, full of islands where evergreen plants and delicious fruits grow. The former obtains a landing, and feeds on the fruit for ever and ever. The latter's canoe glides off, and is carried into a river of interminable course, full of falls and rapids over which the soul tumbles and tumbles to all eternity.

Well, we are all idealists—and materialists. We live in an invisible world here, and construct for ourselves an imagined future of material and moral conditions fairer than mortal eye can see for our hereafter. How came we by this master faculty, possessed, as anthropological inquiry has shown, by the very lowest races on our planet? Where, in the untracked waste of ages, lay the birthday, for lowest as for highest, of man's conscious soul?

Education has been tried among these native tribes, but as soon as childhood is past they relapse into their inherited ways. Take from them the tin-kettle, scalping-knife and flint-lock gun—their insignia of civilisation—and hand them again the birch-bark “rogan,” moose-bone, beaver teeth, flint-stone knife and bow and arrow, and at once they are just where they were when first my Company brought these common trinkets of the civilised world to them. Native industries I found to be *nil*, and the climate made soil cultivation impossible. Sentiment they had none, except a sense of soporific bliss induced by much gorging of pemmican. There were in their language no words to express maternal affection; none to convey the tender solicitude of courtship; there was no term of ordinary politeness, except

in the Loucheux tongue, where it was possible to express thanks. By gifts of shoes, however, an indication of tender thought was conveyed, a sentiment no doubt relative. The men married because they must have some one to make shoes for them; the girls, because, poor souls, they had no say in the matter—and, because, after all, it seemed as well to be the slave of one man as the drudge of a family. The greatest blessing that could befall them was that they should die young. These are not my own statements, though I closely observed the life and habits of the Indians I came among, but information which I derived from an intelligent native, and which of course applies only to his own country.

These, with Scotch, English, Irish, French, Germans, and Chinese—planted further south on British territory—form a medley fantastic and incongruous when huddled in a paragraph, but which, when “strung out” along a base line that runs from rise to set of sun, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from Newfoundland to Vancouver, resolves its elements readily and auspiciously to the man who has eyes to see and ears to hear, and the heart to understand.

I was now on the Nelson River, which carries down to the Bay all the surplus waters of Lake

Winnipeg—an area of 10,000 to 13,000 square miles—and drains a country larger than Europe. We hoisted our lug-sails while native clerks diligently—or idly—paced the wood platform, consuming time and food, and, sailing through Play Green Lake, by the Old Fort, Montreal Point, Berens River, Dog's Head, Bull's Head, Grind Stone Point, Grassy Narrows and Sandy Bar, reached at last, on 13th October, 1859, the Mecca of my journey, Lower Fort Garry on the Red River of the North. Boyish and brave thoughts surged in my brain as I reached it—recollections, perhaps, of Julius Cæsar and his *Veni, Vidi, Vici*, and behind these, sweeter recollections lightening my fears.

“Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom  
Lead Thou me on,  
The night is dark, and I am far from home,  
Lead Thou me on.”



## CHAPTER VII.

HISTORY OF THE SETTLEMENT—FIRST IMPRESSIONS—CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PEOPLE.

Two years after the death and victory of General Wolfe at Quebec in 1763, Canada was ceded by the French to the English under the Treaty of Paris, and the French-Canadians became, nominally at least, Englishmen. While Quebec was still being ruled from Paris, a brave Frenchman with a strong taste for rough travel and exploration penetrated as far as Lake Winnipeg and the Red River in 1732. This dauntless and persevering man followed up his first journey by another expedition which opened up to him a species of ranchman's paradise hitherto unknown to a white man—a level plain of one thousand miles by five hundred, watered by the two great Saskatchewan rivers, and literally covered with wild cattle, quietly feeding on its nutritious grass. The glowing account which he brought back soon aroused the eager interest and enterprise of his wealthier countrymen, and the small trading

parties which had hitherto dealt in furs with the Indians on the east main coast resolved themselves into one great combination called the "North-West Company of Montreal" in 1783. This soon became a powerful organisation, employing six thousand men and spreading its sphere of labour from Montreal to the Pacific. It was a formidable opponent to my Company, which had its headquarters in far-off London and depended on the difficult and uncertain Hudson's Straits for its communication with the shores of the Bay, from which it had not yet penetrated inland more than a few miles. It knew nothing whatever of the Frenchman's great discovery of a herd that would supply all the cities of the world with fresh meat for generations, and which was wandering free on the prairie with no owner, no master, no caretaker, not even a "herd loon."

Great success and peace, however, seldom go hand in hand for any length of time. Discord arose in the North-West camp, resulting in the founding of another association called the "X. Y. Company." With this company, I may note by the way, came the first white bride from Lower Canada in 1806, Marie A. Lasimonier. When I went out she was still living at St. Boniface, the only baptised woman

in the entire country. Two days after her arrival she stood godmother to no fewer than one hundred French half-breed babies, and she is known to all the young folks as "Ma Marraine" — "my godmother." Her life story was indeed a stirring one, and included many a thrilling experience of fires, floods, and hair-breadth escapes from Indians, and famous adventures in a buffalo stampede, as well as experiences at the Battle of Seven Oaks.

But to return—quarrels and jealousies soon broke out between the agents of these two rival companies, so lately one, and this state of things naturally afforded an opportunity to my Company to develop its own resources and extend its scope while the others were engaged in the fray. As usual, however, an excessive amount of Scotch caution was shown, and the forward steps were not made till early in 1800. In connection with this development it became necessary to have the Company's rights distinctly and legally defined. By a charter granted by Charles II. in 1669, the Company had been incorporated and endowed with certain rights and privileges. Its territory, therein described as Rupert's Land, consisted of the whole region drained

by rivers flowing into Hudson Bay. Such phraseology of course was merely the result of insufficient geographical knowledge, for much of the water that flows into the Bay comes from far into the heart of the northern United States. With a view to more precise delimitation, the charter was laid before such eminent lawyers as Erskine, Romilly, Scarlett, and Mansfield, and to test the validity of its ownership my Company in 1811 sold to the Earl of Selkirk a vast tract of land, including the ground upon which at this time stands the colony of the Red River Settlement. The price paid has never been disclosed. Probably it was *nil*—merely a test case. The Earl received full proprietary rights, and on him lay the heavy burden of extinguishing the red man's title to his country. A convenient means of doing so lay to his hand. As it happened, just at this time a compulsory eviction of the poorer tenantry from the Highland estates of the Duchess of Sutherland was going on. Many of these cottar families had lived—or vegetated—on the land from time immemorial, and the victims of what appeared an unnecessarily harsh mode of procedure were thus compelled to seek new homes. Lord Selkirk visited the



parish of Kildonan, where most of the evictions had taken place, and found a ready response to his suggestion of emigration. Within a year from that time a little colony, bearing the well-loved name of Kildonan, had established itself right in the heart of this great continent, far from the tyranny that had desolated the Kildonan at home. They had a hard time of it at first, and were well-nigh as long in the wilderness as the children of Israel. Not all at once did they enter upon the goodness of a land "flowing with milk and honey," nor did quails fall from heaven, ready roasted or otherwise, into the mouths of the multitude during these trying years—years of privations so terrible, borne in a manner so heroic that I dare not describe them lest I should be accused of—let us say—patriotism! They had neither Moses nor Aaron with them through it all, "yet did they not take up the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of your God Remphar," but clung with the tenacity of their dour race to their own Presbyterian worship. And as a reward, it was not only Caleb and Joshua who saw the promised land, for when I visited them in 1859 I found them living in happiness and contentment in as well-ordered a parish as exists on this planet, ministered to

in spiritual things after their own hearts, with no rent, no taxes, no masters, no Duchesses, I had almost said no equals, since all were superiors, Calebs and Joshuas every one. Her Grace might well have marvelled, had she seen them, at the wonderful power and goodness of God in bringing to naught the works of earthly tyrants. For surely some special Providence watched over this little flock, preserving them alive through the Arctic cold, through the spite of rival traders, and the enmity of savage tribes. Two rival fur-trading companies were ready to pay the Indians any price for their complete extermination, and these unfortunately did not want much incentive, having taken a notion that these strangers were digging up the bones of their ancestors and raising crops nourished by their marrow. Disastrous floods and plagues of locusts drove them from point to point, but the Indians were their worst foes, and burned their huts to ashes over their heads, killing several of the settlers. The effect of all this was to force them further and further inland and southward, into a more fertile region, where their final settlement might be altogether prosperous.

"Indians are very amiable at a distance," said one of these settlers to me, "but I defy

the Apostles themselves to live near them in those days and be sure of a to-morrow."

"If anybody could live near them surely it must have been yourselves," I said, adding, with some design of testing my worthy Caleb's general information: "You must have felt like Lord Byron towards his mother" (a subject much in my mind just then).

"Who was he, boy?" asked my friend, adding characteristically, "What did he do?"

"The relations between mother and son," I replied learnedly, "were of such a nature that he refused to go to the funeral of her that brought him into the world, and as soon as the coffin was outside the door he put on his gloves and began to fight."

"Not to fight, but to dance would have been our choice at *their* burials," he replied laconically.

Yet notwithstanding these discouragements the colony was reinforced by another party of emigrants from the Sutherland estates, and a flying visit from their benefactor, Lord Selkirk, set things on a better footing and inaugurated a brighter time. He arranged a treaty of land with the Indians, by whom he was known as the "Silver Chief." For the consideration of two hundred pounds of tobacco a year the

Indian was to cede to him the land from the river bank to "the greatest distance at which a horse on the level prairie could be distinctly seen or daylight seen under his belly between his legs." This document was signed by five chiefs and five whites. I give the chiefs' names in full:—Pequis; Onckidoat, Premier; Mache-Wheseab, Le Sonnant; Kayajieske-binoa, L'Homme Noir; Machkadewikonair, La Robe Noire.

The first-named was the only one still surviving on my arrival. He then resided in the vicinity of the fort. He was a little man, now ninety-three years of age and totally blind, with a great voice and a gift of fluent speech, and was always easily persuaded to tell blood-curdling stories of the past. He had been a friend to the early colony, was quite the Sir Wilfrid Lawson of the district, being a great temperance advocate, though his own eldest son, the "crown prince," was frozen to death while resting by the wayside after a little too much of the spirit distilled from molasses.\*

On 19th June, 1816, a fatal skirmish took place at Seven Oaks between the rival companies, at which Semple, the Governor

\* A fuller account of this chief will be found in a letter of mine to the *Canadian Gazette*, which is printed in the Appendix (A).

of my Company, and twenty men were killed. Happily the various companies amalgamated in 1821, and peace reigned. Whether Lord Selkirk's investment was merely a test sale or not, it is certainly the case that the Company repurchased the entire tract from his heirs for the round sum of £84,000. Sir George Simpson was appointed Governor of the coalition in 1821, a post he filled with dignity and still retained in 1859. Lower Fort Garry, as I found it in 1859, certainly showed outward signs of future prosperity, however misty its past history might have been. As I climbed to the top of the high river bank I found before me the Stone Fort, so called because its houses and loopholed wall were actually built of stone, and in this were unique in my Company's vast domain. Its buildings were shops and stores, with dwelling-houses for the Company's officers and servants. The whole fort was arranged in the form of a parallelogram surrounded by a wall twelve feet high. At each of the four corners was a bastion pierced for guns, like the turrets of the old Scottish embattled castles. As for the tiers of loopholes for musketry which pierced the walls, one wondered whether in case of a siege they would be of more

advantage to assailants or defenders. There was one cannon in the fort which looked as old as Mons Meg at Edinburgh Castle, and might have been constructed at the same time by blacksmith Brawny McKinn. At that time the fort was the station at which, during the summer, boat brigades were outfitted for Fort York or other posts inland. Besides, a very large farm had been brought under cultivation in the immediate vicinity. The task of surveying this farm in acres was my test service for the Company. The experiment in agriculture proved most encouraging, and the harvest was everything that could be desired. The golden-tinted wheat, the plump-round barley, the capital potatoes and turnips, soon showed the fertile capabilities of the Red River Valley.

The residents in the fort formed a very lively community by themselves. They had regular hours for the dispatch of business, and afterwards, to beguile the tedium of the long sub-Arctic nights, they met together for a few hours' jollification, when old Scottish songs were sung in voices cracked and sharpened by the cold northern blasts. Materially assisted by French Cognac, Scotch whisky and Old Jamaica, the fun was kept up merrily till some slipped down and retired into a long and

peaceful slumber. At these carousals a pint of liquor per head was the allowance; and I, a boy of seventeen, was included among the "heads." Many a prayer I uttered, fighting against a temptation almost beyond human power to resist, so far from home, so young, and so alone.

The fort stood in the middle of a two-mile reservation on the river bank. Outside of this limit many of the Company's retired servants had settled, each on the plot of land given him to work and live upon. Among them, too, there were boisterous evenings, for which the fort supplied the material without stint, though in the form of Demerara rum, a coarser beverage than it reserved for its own potations. Superannuation, as Lamb says, sits upon a man in a curious mixture of pleasant ease and irksome ennui. Human nature is terribly lazy—probably laziness is included in "original sin"—but never more so than when a man attempts agriculture after having lived like an Indian for forty or fifty years in the inhospitable far North. My emporium was crowded every day with customers ready to purchase goods for cash, or to barter with their furs and agricultural produce. A record of all articles sold was entered in a sales book.

The currency was sterling, and consisted chiefly of promissory notes issued by my Company, redeemable by bills of exchange granted at sixty days' sight on the Governor and the Committee of the Company in London. These bore a high premium in the United States. The notes were of two denominations, one pound and five shillings. Besides the notes there was a good deal of English gold and silver in circulation. Even in that remote isolation unexpected evidences of civilisation occasionally met my eyes. At my landing upon the river bank I saw an old Englishman engaged in the proud avocation of collector of customs for the colony. In this exalted capacity he resided here during a certain portion of the year to watch the boats passing in and out and to make certain clearances of a primitive character, the total being £2,000, of which my Company paid about £700. There was no better authority not only on the colony, but on the country, than this aged and respected collector of customs. To him everybody who wanted information had recourse. He told me he came to the country in 1813, and to the then very small and young Scotch colony in 1824 after an abrupt dismissal from the service. He had married two native wives, and had a family



of twenty-two children. He was a sort of universal factotum, and acted by turns as catechist, schoolmaster, precentor, farmer, clerk to the Council of Assiniboia, and occasionally when required as administerer of oaths, besides the business already referred to.

The fort, notwithstanding its exceptionally solid limestone construction and its loopholed wall of warlike bastions, used as magazines for the storage of miscellaneous articles, was only a subordinate post. Upper Fort Garry, twenty miles up stream, near the confluence of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers, was the headquarters of the district. There lay the central point of the Northern Department, and there the Governor of the Territory resided. Our head officer there was a truly excellent man, who had been long in the service of the Company, and had been appointed Governor of Assiniboia the year before, in recognition of his character and worth. A cart trail old as the Pyramids of Egypt ran parallel with the river between these two forts. Travelling on horseback was the only mode of locomotion, except the famous "Red River cart," made wholly of wood, and the only home manufacture in the colony worthy of special notice. What the birch-bark canoe

was in the North, this marvellous native conveyance was here. To construct it, only an axe, saw, drawknife, and screw auger were needed, and it carried one thousand pounds for as many miles. It is designed specially to traverse such enormous stretches of prairie as lie between the fort and the Rocky Mountains.

On the whole, I soon made up my mind that the place was but a bit of the ruder civilisation thrown haphazard into the wilds. One half of the daily sales in my shop consisted of strong drink, and as colder weather and Christmas festivities drew near it amounted to about two-thirds. Probably to those of the Company's servants who had spent their lives in boats among the Indians in the far North this might seem a paradise regained. Well, whether paradise or no, the place certainly had many unique features. Its very isolation gave it a strong individuality, and it undoubtedly had a unique and peculiar organisation.

Its population consisted of four principal elements:—first, the descendants of the early French traders, or *voyageurs*, who intermarried with the Indians and were the progenitors of the Metis or Bois-brûlés. These were settled on both banks of the river from

St. Boniface to the United States boundary, and, although quite without education, were well-mannered and kind and obliging to those who treated them as friends. The second element, akin to the first, was provided by the descendants of the Company's servants, mostly Scotsmen from Orkney and the other islands who also had married native wives. These were the English-speaking half-breeds, and lived on the lower banks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. They appeared to me more docile than the others, and hospitable to a fault. The third element was the Sutherland, Kildonan, and Selkirk colony, who lived in the parish of that name, and were in easy circumstances. The warm, hospitable instincts of their race still lingered in their Scottish bosoms. The fourth group were the Swampy Indians, who had somehow managed to make their way up from the Bay, and settle between Lower Fort Garry and Lake Winnipeg. They too were polite and kind in disposition. Three forms of religion were taught among them: Roman Catholic (Bishop Taché), Episcopalian (Bishop Anderson), and Presbyterian (Rev. John Black). Altogether they numbered about 13,000, of whom 5,500 were French half-breeds.

I might have included as a fifth element a native Indian population of two or three thousand. There were two distinct groups of these, the Ojibway and the Salteaux, ruled over by five chiefs. Both were of course nomadic, but the latter claimed and lived upon the lower part of the river and on Lake Winnipeg, while the former claimed the upper part of the river and the Red Lake, which belongs to the United States, and is separated from British territory only by the precise but intangible boundary line of a parallel of latitude 49. They used to meet in summer at our forts and bask in the sun for months. Their hunting grounds were situated on both territories, and they were often involved in serious hostilities, and not only against each other. They constituted a nondescript and somewhat dangerous class of barbarians, who when pressed by the United States troops sometimes took shelter among our Indians, and, as the population was unarmed, these gatherings of wild, painted tribes caused not a little uneasiness and alarm. The sale of liquor to these Indians was prohibited under penalties of from £5 to £10 for each offence, but notwithstanding this their half-breed kinsmen generally procured all they wanted for them,

and the red man of the plains might often be seen lying drunk on the river bank. All attempts to stop such doings proved utterly futile; and drunkenness and disorder, leading to many brawls and stabbing affrays, were all too common.

To save us all, red and white alike, from ourselves, there were no less than ten Roman Catholic, eight Church of England, and four Presbyterian places of worship within the legally defined limits of the colony.

Two Roman Catholic priests arrived in 1818 as pioneers, followed in 1820 by the Rev. J. West, under whose doctrine the Scotch colony worshipped. In my time Drs. Taché and Anderson and the Rev. John Black were the clergymen in charge of the three denominations.

Altogether the community offered a curious mixture of races and languages surely never equalled since the building of Babel and the confusion of tongues. There seemed but little prospect of this heterogeneous collection of humanity, with its various traditions, instincts, temperaments, and beliefs, being brought into line with Christianity. Some of the ceremonies observed by the natives seemed far enough away from both civilisation

and religion. One of these, the autumn Dog Feast, was celebrated near the fort in an enclosure of twenty feet square, fenced in with branches of trees, two openings being left for entrance and exit. The ceremony occupied three or four days, during which the enclosures were crowded with savages, sitting side by side to enjoy the sweet canine tit-bit. In the centre were erected two upright poles with large stones at their bases, both coloured red with the blood of the dog sacrifice. After the dead dogs had lain exposed on the stones a short time, the medicine-man began certain ceremonies, unfolding many curious prescriptions of his own from the "sacred bag" meantime to encourage his company, after which the dogs were cut up and served round, each choosing the portion he meant to devour. What would the irate vegetarian say to the man before me holding the tail of the repulsive sacrifice by both hands and savagely picking between the joints with a set of beautiful white teeth, licking the fat from his lips like honey from the honeycomb, another holding the head and placing the ear between his teeth, cutting it off by the skull, and the whole disappearing down the gulf of the savage's throat, while a third was busy

digging out the eyes and the brain, to eat along with the harder portion of the lean leg? An uncouth and repulsive sight it was, and seemed to me a confused conglomeration of rites, destitute of any meaning or purpose, only possibly to supply a *raison d'être* for conjurer and medicine-man. The special object of their office was the solemn act of communion with the dark spirits. To keep it from dying out they initiated novices into the mysteries of their fraternity by a fast of ten days' duration, and to keep the novice awake while he is dying by inches, the "medicine drum" does daily service. Besides paying the price of initiation, the candidate must be a man known to the adepts as eligible, and especially gifted with the power of secret-keeping. I have heard it said that Christian ex-conjurers have been known to express an opinion that they had possessed a certain power when pagans which they lost after their baptism. I give this for what it may be worth. The "medicine-man's" mixtures of roots were unmistakably highly poisonous, and possessed medicinal virtue. Permanent contortion of the features, the wholesale growth of unnatural hair over the whole surface of the body, the eruption of black blotches on the black skin,

and, last, but not least, the causing of abortion in females, are among the effects of their drugs. They have even a theory of sex, and as males are always preferred to females, the latter being accounted burdensome, they diet the mothers with roots and what not.

Many amusing anecdotes were current in the colony of errors made by some of its less educated officers. One sent home for a cloak as a gift for his wife, which, however, appeared in the form of a timepiece. A "clock" had been ordered. On another occasion the Governor, in disallowing an item, told his secretary to "put nothing," when, in lieu of the twenty articles desired, two hundred came with the ship.

Our officials, when they wished to become Benedicts, often married Indian girls. Many, however, did not care to do so, and would petition the Company to select wives for them and send them out by the next boat. Their wishes were, as a rule, complied with, and the selection was nearly always satisfactory. Among the archives of the Company are found receipts from factors running thus: "Received per *Lapwing* Jane Goody, as per invoice, in good trim"; and "Received per *Osprey* Matilda Timpins, returned per *Lapwing* as not being in accordance with description contained in invoice."



One of the unfortunate characteristics of the settlers in the district was the custom of marrying at an excessively early age, with the result that unhappy unions and all their attendant evils were too common. Wilful young people were too often encouraged in their folly by their elders, and it seemed difficult to suggest any remedy for the regrettable state of things that resulted. There seemed no choice but to leave society to work out its own salvation as soon as it recognised its error.

Among the natives women held a position of equality with men, and even received considerable attention from them, sharing their amusements everywhere. Men and women were always seen together. A woman could be or do anything. Social intercourse between the sexes was absolutely unfettered. Boys and girls, youths and maidens, mixed freely. Love-matches were the rule, and I have often seen dusky faces illuminated by "love light." The young people chose each other, and either of them might take the initiative plunge. Preliminaries being settled, the prospective bridegroom sent a friend to the prospective bride's father, informing him of his wish to marry the child daughter. Consent followed almost as a matter of course, and the bridegroom then sent

a present of a bottle of rum to the bride's father, and the bargain was fully recognised. An auspicious day was chosen for the marriage, and copious potations being the custom, the festival lasted for weeks on a stretch, with "fiddling and dancing and serving the devil." For that time at least "they toil not, neither do they spin," but spend day after day and night after night in a paradise of brawls.

That the native ladies were as a rule attractive, a personal reminiscence will abundantly prove. It is a difficult thing to say just where boyhood and manhood part. There is no strict line of demarcation. But in my own case, and I fancy in most cases, it is marked by the suddenly developed feeling of reverence for womanhood. When a woman ceases to be regarded with carelessness, and the idea of woman in its pomp of loveliness and purity dawns upon the young mind, boyhood has ended for ever, and the gravity of manhood, with all its woes and cares, and all its self-sufficing and self-respecting views and instincts, has commenced. I remember the day—9th November, 1859—when this spring was touched in my humble self. It was a superb summer day, and I was busy behind the counter of my little store. By-and-by the door opened, and three native ladies

came in. They made themselves very much at home, coming inside the counter as they pleased, the better to examine our new stock of goods, I myself not escaping their keen scrutiny, as part and parcel of the stuff imported from another world. Up and down stairs they flitted, enjoying themselves immensely, chattering gaily in Cree, Salteaux, English, anything. One of the trio, a shade darker in skin than the others, but with exquisite black eyes and the features of a Grecian statue, asked me very politely to go upstairs with her, as she had found a pair of gloves she would like. Soon, amid much innocent laughter and gaiety, I was fitting a glove on her little hand. Heavens! what a spirit of joy radiated from her eyes! She was dressed in deep mourning, but there was no trace of gloom in her gay explanation, "I am two-thirds Scotch, you know, and my grandfather is not long dead." I must have looked my admiration too openly, for she blushed suddenly. Evanescent as the colour was, it was enough, and I realised that she was a woman. I never beheld her face again. She went to the Canadas and never returned. But she had opened a new chapter of existence for me, and life was a graver thing thereafter.

Indeed, I saw much to admire in these half-breed folk as a race. They had much ingenuity, resolution, tolerance, hospitality, discretion, and various other qualities not over-rife on this planet. But as to ethical or intellectual virtue, the habit of right choice in moral or mental questions, the query of the philosophers lies still before us unanswered, Can these things be taught?

After some skirmishes between autumn and winter, snow and frost laid hold of the ground sufficiently to enable the annual northern packet to leave the fort for the northern districts. The first stretch was three hundred and fifty miles over the ice on Lake Winnipeg to Norway House. The party set out on 10th December, and the means of transit were in the first place sledges, drawn by splendid dogs, and in the second snowshoes. These sledges (of Indian design) were drawn by four dogs to each, and carried a burden of six to seven hundred pounds. With such a load they travelled forty miles a day. The dogs, whose career, poor things, would end tragically at the next autumn dog feast, were yoked in fitting harness, set with little bells, which cheered the flagged spirits of the voyagers with their merry jingle. They traversed the frozen lake in eight

days, running at a quick jog-trot from long before daybreak until dusk, when a frozen whitefish, about two pounds in weight, was thrown to each dog and devoured with a voracity only equalled by the devourer's devourer next year. At the end of the first stage the packet was overhauled and repacked, one portion for the Bay, the other for the Saskatchewan and the far-off Mackenzie districts. For this new sets of packet-bearers travelled eastward, westward, and northward, while the first stage party returned to the fort with the packet from the Bay. Not till the end of the following February did the packet-bearers from west and north reach us overland by Fort Carlton, on the great Saskatchewan River. As for news from the outside world, that was as impossible for us, at least at this season, as from the planet Jupiter.

By the time the first party returned Christmas festivities were in full swing, and dances and entertainments were the order of the day. Not a glance had I to spare, however, for any such, my spare time being all devoted to study, especially to the study of the Indian language. For instruction in this I employed a young half-breed, undertaking to pay him a pint and a half of Demerara rum per week, worth about

4s. 6d., by means of which he might start a ball or dance. All he aimed at was "to make a start," trusting to other young men to do the same and finish up the quantum. Judging from the amount consumed, the inhabitants must have been positively drenched in liquor.

Amid the festivities a sad and sensational piece of news reached us. The Company had recently established a freighting post some two hundred miles away on United States territory, and had called it Georgetown, in compliment to its governor. The post was in charge of a Scotch half-breed, who had obtained leave to visit the settlement for three very special purposes, viz., in the first place, to share in his native country's Christmas festivities; in the second, to enjoy a chat with and to console his aged Indian mother; and last, but not least, to marry and take one of his country's daughters back with him to his semi-civilised post, in the neighbourhood of that savage warrior "Sitting Bull," the Sioux Indian chief, on the plains of Minnesota. The bride-elect was likewise a Scotch half-breed, and, to make the tragedy the more touching, it was said that it was a love-match. They had known each other from childhood, and were in the same social position. He had served at many posts in the North, was

a first-rate traveller, accustomed from early boyhood to such work. Though intensely attached to his lady-love, he would not marry till he was sure of a commission as trader in the service, a distinction which he was to receive in the early spring. From my fort dogs and men were sent on to meet him and bring him into the colony, but he was too impatient to wait for these, and started over the uninhabited waste prairie with mules and a waggon, a means of conveyance quite inconsistent with the severity of the cold—fifty degrees of frost. But his strong constitution and the object of his visit made him rash. About fifty miles from our post at Pembina, on the boundary line, he found his party had run short of provisions, and he then volunteered to start to this post alone, with the intention of sending back assistance. He thought of reaching the post at the end of the first day's travel, but found it impossible and had to take shelter in the snow. The succeeding morning he resumed his journey, but alas! in the wrong direction. During the second night he kept running in a circle to preserve the circulation; but hope appears to have finally deserted him, and having hung a portion of his clothing on a tree to attract the attention of any passers-by, he lay

down, and was found with one hand on his heart and the other containing a compass, frozen to death. A severe snowstorm had raged during the nights he had spent on that waste plain fighting for dear life, the thermometer having fallen to forty-five degrees below zero ; while a searching north wind blew mercilessly over the lonely waste, carrying the spirit of the lost traveller into the gloom. At the open mouth of the grave the bride, her *petite* figure clad in the deepest mourning, was the cynosure of all eyes. Poor thing, it was too much for her, and she was carried away more dead than alive, having only one desire, that of being placed with her lover in the cold frozen grave. My young heart bled for her, and, hidden behind the crowd, found relief in a flood of boyish tears. One more event, and this year of my initiation is closed. The first newspaper ever published in the country was established on 28th December and called "The Nor'-Wester," the project being carried out by two enterprising Canadians named Buckingham and Caldwell, who had had some experience in connection with the Press in Ontario. The two-sheeted infant appeared once a fortnight, and cost three dollars per annum ; its reading matter was dear at three cents.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### GENERAL EVENTS DURING 1860—1868.

1860.

AFTER a long winter of festivity, fiddling and dancing through all the frozen months, a portion of the population, on the approach of spring, turned again to the labour of farming, freighting, and buffalo hunting on the plains. Early in June two fleets of boats left the fort for Portage Laloche to take the Mackenzie River goods and bring back furs on their return for transport to Hudson Bay. Two specially qualified river guides accompanied this annual expedition. Their names were Alexis L'Espérance and Baptiste Bruce. L'Espérance was a Canadian of long service; since 1815 in fact, and in 1824 was a midman in Sir George Simpson's canoe on a visit to the Island of Vancouver. Other fleets of boats were dispatched to Hudson's Bay, and many oxen were yoked in the Red River carts for the journey across the plains to the Saskatchewan and

Swan River districts. These were to return to us loaded with the staple food of the country, pemmican and dried meat. The country was entirely self-sustaining, and in its supply of fish, flesh and fowl had probably no equal in the world.

The autumn white fishing was another important annual event. Millions of these excellent fish were thus secured, hung on spits to be frozen, and then carried home on sledges to be distributed free of charge to the colony. Wild fruits were never lacking, gooseberries, strawberries, raspberries, plums and different varieties of currants of excellent flavour. Wild flowers and blossoming shrubs bloomed in the woods and prairies as soon as the snow melted. Foremost were the anemones, which covered the yet frozen prairie with a lovely carpet of colours, each flower being provided by Nature with a tiny cloak, which the slender blossom draws around it for protection when the winds are chill. And one might walk all day through fields of magnificent lilies. The red and June cherries were the first to put on their garlands, and then the woods were white with the profusion of their blossom. The hawthorn followed—a dwarf tree—but so loaded with bloom that each seemed one single nosegay.

But the spirea was the most beautiful of all, with its pink and white cone-shaped flower clusters poised on every branch. Honeysuckles adorned the prairie, hops grew in abundance in the woods, winter berries, the partridge's favourite, grew in wood and plain alike.

By right of the Company's Charles II. Charter, it ruled the colony absolutely. The Councillors of Assiniboia held their office in virtue of commissions granted to them by it, emanating from its house in London. The Council met at Fort Garry, and the public were not admitted to its deliberations. Two Bishops, the Governor, and a few of the more influential colonists, formed the Bench, presided over by the Company's M.D. In 1849 a half-breed named Sayer was apprehended on a charge of trading furs with the Indians and put upon his trial. He was convicted, but the prisoner's compatriots surrounded the place of his confinement with the avowed intention of liberating him and killing the man who locked him up. No further attempt to dispute its absolute authority was made until late in 1859, when a Canadian named McKennay suddenly appeared on the scene and commenced, in the broad face of day, to build a hotel, naming it, although carpeted with

sawdust only, the "Royal Hotel." But the Company, fearing nothing, looked on this time with unruffled indifference. A Committee of the British House of Commons sat, in 1857, to inquire into the isolated settlement on the Red River, with the result that two Canadians, civil engineers, were employed for two years to survey a part of the country with a view to a route on British soil from a point on Lake Superior to Fort Garry. In 1860 one of these gentlemen published the result of his experiences in a popular form; calling his book "The Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857 and of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858." This was almost all that came of this first venture, and the matter was allowed to rest. Early in 1860 the scheme was altogether abandoned, on the somewhat absurd ground of physical difficulties. The Annual Council of the Company was not held that summer, owing to the illness of Sir George Simpson. The sad news of his death, near Montreal, reached us in September. Swift gave it for his opinion that whoever could make two ears of corn or two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before would deserve better of mankind, and do more

essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together. What there is of truth in this famous saying may be applied to Sir George Simpson. Districts where there was one post when he entered on his duty of Governor, had now their tens. He had opened a new door for commerce and civilisation and discovered a new country, and this he did by his great journey, a stupendous feat in those days, from Montreal, through the uninhabited wilds of North America, the vast territories of the Russian Empire, to London, and across the Atlantic to the starting-point. I may be forgiven for supposing that he was peculiarly fitted by the Celtic elements in his temperament, and by the influences under which he passed as a young man, to fill his important position. It cast a gravity over us all to hear that this veteran pillar of the Company had passed away, and was now, like so many travellers and administrators of our history, one of the men of the past.

Our annual mail, by York Factory, also brought us the sad news of the fate of our companion barque *Kitty*, which we had expected to meet in Hudson Straits on our outward journey last year. She had been nipped and crushed to pieces in the ice

there, on the 5th September, off the middle Savages. The crew left the ship in two boats; and after indescribable miseries, made the land on the dreary Saddle Back Island. Both the boats then attempted to cross the straits, and work their way down to Labrador. Sixty-one days after, one of them reached the northernmost of the Moravian Missions. The other boat, with the captain and ten men, landed on Akpatok Island. They were at first hospitably received by the pagan Eskimos, but as food grew scarce, and the natives began to realise their helpless condition, they were all murdered one night while sleeping in their tent. This happened in January, 1860, a terrible fate which, by the care of a kind Providence, we had escaped.

At the same time we heard of the safe return of the steam yacht *Fox*, Captain L. McClintock, with the authentic news of the sad fate of Sir John Franklin and his brave crew, at last putting an end to all conjecture as to the actual spot where they suffered and died—a curious fulfilment of the prediction of the native conjurer at Fort York, early in September of last year!

No chapter in modern history is more touching than that which tells of Franklin's

mysterious disappearance from this world, and of the untiring efforts made by his devoted wife to trace him and his comrades—refusing to admit that efforts for his rescue were futile, hoping against hope and persevering to the last. At last Captain McClintock succeeded in doing all that could be done, and the world knew that the explorer, already recognised as one of the heroes of civilisation, was also one of its martyrs.

One more tragic tale and I conclude the history of this year. In the beginning of November a Roman Catholic priest, returning from a mission of kindness among the Indians, was overtaken by a furious tempest such as only these waste open plains know. His horse succumbed under the cold, and when the man dismounted he found to his dismay that his legs would no longer support him. All he could do was to dig a hole in the snow, and drag his already frozen limbs into the cold bed, placing his horse to the weather side for protection from the piercing north wind. The horse died, and he cut strips of its flesh off and ate them raw with relish. With only a buffalo robe for covering, he lay thus for four days and five nights, when he was found by a traveller and brought to Mr. Rollette,

an American official on the frontier. This gentleman gave him the shelter and comfort of his house, but soon the flesh began to fall away from the bones in horrible pieces. The amputation of one leg and one foot became necessary. He was removed to St. Boniface's Cathedral, where a still worse fate awaited him, for that magnificent building was burnt to the ground on 14th December. From the burning flames the poor half-dead cripple was carried with the bedding on which he lay, scarcely escaping death by suffocation. One man was burnt to death in this fire, and a costly library, the only one in the colony, was utterly destroyed.

1861.

One event ever memorable to me marked the spring of 1861. That was the death of my friend Mr. Angus McDonald, who had been the means of placing me where I was. He had been stationed at Fort Garry, twenty miles away, and we met as often as we could, and wrote to each other frequently. His letters were full of genuine and friendly advice; and if I was tempted to step aside from the path of duty he did not fail to point out to me the pitfalls that awaited my youthful feet.



Happy and thankful I am to say that the Governor had given him good accounts of my energy and ability, being pleased that already I might be classed as a first-rate Indian linguist. Thus the last letter I ever received from him was one of congratulation and approval, a circumstance it gladdens me to remember. For some time he had been in bad health, and at last, unexpectedly, I received a summons to his bedside. Alas! our meeting and our parting were such as words of mine cannot describe. They passed, and the end came, and after it the funeral in Kildonan Churchyard. There were no pipes to play a coronach over this son of the isles, no strains of "The Land of the Leal" or "Lochaber no more" to follow him to his grave. But the psalm was sung which lifts the thoughts of mourners from the fragility of human life to the immortality of Him to Whom a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past and as a watch in the night. A mile in length, the procession glided along the river ice, and the folk from the old country and the dusky natives of the new lined the river banks and sobbed as they watched it pass. This was his funeral's unbidden and unmarshalled pomp. His life of strenuous industry and stainless purity, his

genial and kindly temper, made him an example and support to his comrades. He was one of those rare Christian souls for whom indeed this world is too vexed and rough a scene, but to whom affection will never grudge her tenderest memories. His loss to me was irreparable. I placed a stone at the head of his grave in token of my never-dying esteem.

Erected by his friend Roderick Campbell.

In loving memory of

ANGUS McDONALD,

Born in the parish of Ness, Island of Lewis, Scotland, in 1834.

Died at Fort Garry, Red-River Settlement, Hudson

Bay Company's Territory, 1st April, 1861.

During this year the country suffered much from floods, one of the most serious obstacles to agriculture in this flat land. Some of the colonists remembered similar inundations in 1809, 1826, and 1852, attributable, like the present, to two causes, (1) late springs and sudden thaws of deep snow, (2) the lack of sufficient means of drainage. The river course being tortuous and extremely flat, all landmarks were completely obliterated, the landscape being transformed into one vast ocean, and the only means of communication were boats and Indian bark canoes. Except

my fort, which stood on a high, solid bank of limestone, the whole colony, and far into the United States, was under water. Houses, barns and stables floated on the surface, travelling slowly to the lower level of Lake Winnipeg, cocks crowing on the roofs as they glided to destruction. The crops were *nil*, but the prospects of good buffalo hunting and lake fisheries later on alleviated the fears of the inhabitants.

In the midst of this a second destructive fire broke out and entirely destroyed four large buildings on the premises of the Roman Catholic Mission of St. Boniface, which contained valuable stores for the use of the inland stations of this vast diocese. The adherents of St. Boniface were the poorest in the colony, and the misery caused by flood and fire lay heavily upon them. About the same time occurred the death of the oldest resident Sister of Charity, the first of her Order in the North. No spot of dry land existed to serve as a place of interment, and the body had to be kept to wait the subsiding of the flood.

In August Paullet Chartrain fatally stabbed John Monkman with a chisel during a drinking bout. An indictment was drawn up, and he was found guilty and sentenced—to a few months'

confinement. The medical head magistrate having died, we were thus apparently left destitute of law. Nor had we a substitute in military occupation.

Meanwhile the builder of the "Royal Hotel" had begun to write himself down a "Company," his half-brother, Dr. J. C. Schultz, having arrived. This gentleman proved to be the most formidable opponent my Company had as yet encountered. He took over the "Nor'-Wester" newspaper, and made the Company's "iniquitous and worthless charter" the object of his periodical assaults. It was, he declared, a gross imposition on the credulity of the people, and ought not to be tolerated for a day.

It was in 1861, too, that a small steamboat first plied upon the river. The Indians hated and feared it, seeing it going miraculously without oars or sail, and called it a "water-devil," motioning it back with incantations and exorcisms. Its career was short, however, as it sank in its winter berth.

1862.

The New Year broke sadly for me. I had not yet recovered from the loss of my friend. Outward things went on as usual, but the mere change of a figure in the calendar meant

much to me,—as indeed it does to us all every year, though why it should is difficult to say. We know what the old year has taken from us, and yet we ask ourselves with unquenched hope, what manner of good thing the bantling has for us, wrapped in the folds of his swaddling clothes.

It was during this spring of 1862 that we made a second clutch at the skirts of civilisation. It took the form of a scientific association, to be called the "Institute of Rupert's Land"; and our worthy foe, the doctor-editor, became secretary. After a short and erratic, in fact somewhat staggering career, it died of inanition.

This spring also witnessed a threatening of famine among the poorer portion of the community, particularly the French and Swampy Indians. Scores of starving people besieged us daily, asking for food, though their needs must have been fictitious, as they had fish in abundance. Later on, in the season for seed wheat, the grain, instead of being sown in the ground, was roasted in pans and eaten, to save labour! Thus we got no return for our trouble and expense. And as it turned out, the little that was sown was destroyed by a hailstorm which passed over the colony.

On 18th May our new Governor, A. G. Dallas, Esq., arrived at Fort Garry, a man so extraordinarily tall and thin that it was one of our irreverent jests to say that he was one who compelled a second look, if only to see to the top of him. He brought a piper with him, and the unfamiliar strains of music, the ribboned pipes, and the player in feathered Glengarry and the garb of Old Gaul, brought crowds of savages to gaze with wonder on the novel spectacle.

On the 26th May the steamer *International* arrived in the colony, bringing one hundred and sixty Canadians, who had come with the intention of acting as pioneers in the discovery of an overland route to the Cariboo goldfields, now famous for their rich repositories of gold and "surface indication." A new judge was also among her passengers, as well as many private individuals, come for the purpose of buying furs. Up to now very little of this private trading existed. Under the privileges granted by my Company's much-abused charter, indiscriminate fur-trading in its territory was illegal. But it was becoming clear that, under the influence of a somewhat sophisticated newspaper, and steam communication with the greatest Republic in the world, our isolation

was doomed, and our intercourse with the civilised world assured. Parties without number were fitting out expeditions by boats to penetrate into our hitherto private domain; and apparently all we could do was to look on, or quietly do our best to counteract their efforts. Foremost in this new development was the doctor-editor, our inveterate and invulnerable opponent. It would have paid my Company to have made him a chief factor on the first day of his arrival in the colony, or to have pensioned him off for the rest of his natural life at £4,000 a year, and sent him back to Canada to enjoy it. On the 14th June our new Governor embarked from the fort in a boat, which we had provided to convey him, to attend his first Northern Council at Norway House, this being the first stage of a lengthened tour of inspection through the country under his administration, from which he returned home, by the prairie route, on the 30th September.

In August Lord Milton and Dr. Cheadle arrived in the colony, in the course of a journey across the entire continent, only part of which task was to be accomplished this year. Another of our visitors was an American gentleman on his way home from the Arctic Circle, where he had spent three years in connection with the

Smithsonian Institution at Washington. He was of a positively alarming patriotism. Woe betide the unfortunate wight who criticised Uncle Sam in his presence!

Various parties of hopeful and intrepid Cariboo miners passed through the fort as the year went on. Truly the gold they were in search of would have been as cheaply procured from any firm of bankers.

The new Judge, Mr. John Black, was not new to the country, having served the Company for a period of fifteen years. Of course the *Nor'-Wester* made much capital out of this, pronouncing it merely a party appointment, by which the Judge was to help his former colleagues.

Soon afterwards a second distinguished party arrived in our midst, that of the Earl of Dunmore and Captains Cooper and Thynne. They were on a buffalo and bear hunting expedition, and had narrowly escaped the scalping knives of the "braves" of the Sioux chief "Little Crow" while crossing the plains of Minnesota and Dakota. This wily chief made a sudden and unexplained attack upon Fort Ridgely and the town of New Ulm, destroying the latter completely. The wholesale massacre of the white settlers on the Minnesota and



Sunk Rivers followed. Nearly two thousand persons were murdered amid circumstances of the most appalling barbarity. Men were shot down, children tortured and burnt alive, and their mothers slaughtered with the tomahawk. Our stage-coach was also attacked, and the passengers killed and scalped mercilessly, so that the route was again closed, and we were isolated once more.

Uneasiness breeds fear, and a meeting was held inviting the settlers to sign a petition to the Colonial Secretary asking for troops. I was now ordered to discontinue the system of paying cash for "country produce." This was about the first move of our new Governor, and one for which he was severely taken to task by the *Nor'-Wester* and not a few of the settlers.

### 1863.

In 1863 came my first promotion. Governor Dallas left the fort on a tour of inspection in the Southern Department *viâ* Lac La Pluie, but first he held the Northern Council at Fort Garry instead of Norway House. There it was decided that I should be placed in charge of a new post at the head of Berens River, in the Norway House district. Such an appointment, after only three years' service, was a

unique circumstance, and I naturally felt greatly gratified, especially as the Governor himself presented me with a forty-guinea first-class wire-twist gun in appreciation, as he kindly phrased it, of my services.\*

On 13th August I took leave of my fort and my friends, and embarked in one of the brigades-boats bound for York Factory. I was to land at the mouth of the Berens River, and proceed to my destination far up near its source. A regular north-east monsoon, never before known in the land, blew during the journey, and, instead of crossing Lake Winnipeg in five days, we took twenty-three and a half. The result was that the boatmen mutinied, and I was landed at the starting-point of my new journey sick at heart and depressed.

This storm brought wider disaster, however, than my personal disappointment, for the Company lost a year's outfit through the disablement of three ships: the *Anglo-Saxon*, *Canada*, and *Ocean Nymph*. A brigade of two hundred carts sent to Fort Abercrombie late in autumn to bring back loads returned empty!

A very distinguished member of my Company

\* The letter from the officer in charge intimating my appointment will be found in the Appendix.

died this year, Mr. Edward Ellice. In a superstitious world his passing away from it might by some be taken as cause and effect of the many disasters which the Company have suffered commercially during it. He began life as the deadly opponent of the Company, was the most active spirit in the North-West Company, which fought against as well as competed with it. In later life he became a member of Parliament, and a member of Earl Grey's Administration, and the founder of the Reform Club. Mr. Ellice thus mildly resembled the famous Frenchman Radisson, who fought for France in Hudson's Bay, and he fought with equal valour as a servant of the Hudson's Bay Company, passing without compunction from one master to another, yet preferring, of course, as Dugald Dalgetty would have done, to serve most heartily the master who treated him the most liberally. Only Radisson was an adventurer in the modern acceptation of the word, and resembled Dugald Dalgetty more closely than any other character in our history. Six years ago (1857) evidence was given, at a Select Committee of the House of Commons, that the soil of the Red River valley was fertile, and that wheat would flourish. Some witnesses denied this, and

Mr. Ellice was leader and chief among them, nay impressed his views upon his colleagues so strongly that the opening of the Hudson's Bay Territory to the settlers was postponed to the end of the charter—twelve years, telling them that ice was found two feet below the surface in this Red River in the month of August. In this he might, though wrong, be perfectly sincere, being unaware that this was a cause which made wheat and other vegetables come to maturity with such marvellous luxuriant growth. When the report of Mr. Labouchere (afterwards Lord Taunton), the chairman, was submitted to his colleagues, Mr. Gladstone submitted another, and the votes for both were equal, the draft report of the chairman being carried by the chairman's casting vote. He and his fellows desired and laboured to preserve the monopoly which my Company had exercised for two centuries, and from which the earlier members had drawn the enormous dividends of 300 per cent. that they succeeded. This marvellous result was due chiefly to the trade in furs alone.

The Indians, too, gave us a good deal of concern during this year. Ever since the atrocious massacres by the Sioux in Minnesota the previous year constant rumours had been

afloat regarding the alleged intentions of that barbarous tribe to pay the colony a visit. In the end of May, 1863, this rumour became a reality, and a band of eighty Sioux "braves," under the leadership of that wily chief "Little Crow," actually arrived with a complaint to our Governor against the Americans, who had not kept faith with them. "Little Crow" had been induced to give up some prisoners under pretext of exchange, but after the Americans had been safely sent back it was found that the Indians had been hanged some time before. As he knew he was no match for the enemy in sharp practice or otherwise, he begged our Governor to exert his influence in inducing General Sibley to come to terms with him. The Governor promised to do what he could, and after he presented them with some provisions—ammunition he would not give—they took their departure, and the colony once more breathed freely. Later on this formidable and able chief was found dead on the plains, but the manner of his death was never known to us. As it turned out, Brigadier-General Sibley did not do very much harm to the Sioux, who had crossed the boundary to elude his troops. He made efforts to employ a Roman Catholic priest, Père André, as ambassador, but the

Indians distrusted both his efficiency and the General's good faith after having been already deceived by him.

Meanwhile our Governor had been making his southern tour, and in doing so he encountered Senator Ramsay, of Minnesota, who had come on a treaty mission to negotiate with two thousand six hundred Chippeways near Red Lake. By arrangement with the Senator, Mr. Dallas effected a great improvement in our mails, establishing a system of "through bags."

One other interesting circumstance of this year was the arrival, by northern express, of a parcel of documents which had been wandering for twelve years among the Eskimos within the Arctic Circle. While her Majesty's discovery ship *Investigator* was lying off Cape Bathurst, in the Polar Sea, her commander, Sir R. McClure, gave the packet in charge to an Eskimo there to be delivered at the nearest of our posts, and so forwarded to England by the Company's packets. It was discovered by a Mr. Roderick McFarlane,\* a native of my calf country, an officer of high talents and a very sensible, clear-headed man.

\* Copies of Commander McClure's letter and other correspondence relating to these documents, thus lost for thirteen years, will be found in Appendix.

1864.

In 1864 the "Royal Hotel" had become an embryo village, and, as it seemed, the focus of the Red River land question. Where the Company had formerly sold land at 7s. 6d. per acre, it was now selling at £40 per square chain. The year before a report had reached us that the International Financial Association had negotiated the actual transfer of my Company's stock in the London market, and that it had thus become extinct. "And," added the *Nor'-Wester*, "its officers have been sold 'like dumb, driven cattle.'" The news gave impetus to both American and Canadian residents to buy up land near Fort Garry at any price, which proved the beginning and the end of the Company's monopoly, by means of which it used to sell to settlers large plots of ground on a lease of nine hundred and ninety-nine years, for which it granted deeds. Now buildings began to appear here and there on the bare prairie, each like a Noah's ark on an interminable sea of grass.

In September a large party of wretched-looking Sioux Indians arrived in the colony. There were four hundred lodges, including some four thousand souls, divided into four

bands. These were the Indians who had committed the barbarous massacre of white people in Minnesota already mentioned. The authorities of that state had sent a Major Hatch to form a frontier garrison at Pembina, hence their retreat to us for refuge. But who could trust them? We felt that they might at any moment repeat their cruelty, making us their victims, defenceless as we were. They were starving, poor creatures, and were quite willing to sell their children for food. And we had little to give them, a scorching heat and extreme drought having greatly injured our harvest the year before, so that flour was selling at 30s. per hundred pounds. Major Hatch had paid as high as 12s. per bushel for inferior grain for horse feed. Three little white children, whose parents had been massacred, were taken from them by private people; and the Grey Nuns purchased a boy and three girls for a hundredweight of pemmican. In winter some of the Major's officers visited the colony and gained over some of the residents to a scheme for kidnapping the principal Sioux chiefs. They selected "Little Six," a half-brother of "Little Crow," and another named "Medicine Bottle," and having allowed them to drink as much alcohol as they chose, they carried them



off, to wake on American soil, a device surely more remarkable for its sharp practice than its honour or humanity.

Sad news reached us of a party of miners who had passed through the colony *en route* for the Cariboo gold diggings in 1862. Three of the five were brothers, which made the story the more tragic. In order to shoot a certain rapid on the Fraser River with greater safety, they had lashed their two frail canoes together. They were swamped, and their cargoes lost. Two of the three brothers Rennie swam ashore, while the other three men landed on a bare granite boulder in midstream. There they remained without food for forty-eight hours, after which, by the aid of a rope, they were hauled to the bank, frost-bitten and wholly exhausted. The other two started for the Company's nearest fort, which took them twenty-eight days to reach. Indians in the meantime found the other three men, but only two alive. Maddened by starvation, they had killed the other and gnawed his flesh. Later one of the survivors did the same to the other, and at last died himself. Their bones were found in spring. The Indians who had seen this act of cannibalism declared that they dared not approach the spot, as the men had

utterly lost their reason, and were quite demoniac.

As to events in the fort during the year, I must not forget to chronicle the inauguration of a lodge of Freemasons, called "The Northern Light," with our doctor-editor as Worshipful Master. Many of the residents, natives included, urged by curiosity or other motive, entered the mystic brotherhood, and soon a large section of our population went about with an air of solemnity and wisdom, clothed in mystery.

In May Governor Dallas and Bishop Anderson left the colony, and Mr. William McTavish, Governor of Assiniboia, succeeded to the governorship of Rupert's Land. In June Dr. J. Rae, the Arctic explorer, and a Mr. Schwieger, C.E., passed through the colony on a journey across the continent prospecting with a view to laying down a telegraph line contemplated by the Company's new stockholders.

To our experience of the evils of droughts, floods, frosts, and Indians was now added that of a plague of locusts such as had only twice before been equalled, viz., in 1818 and 1857. The heat of the summer was exceptional, 120° in the shade, and when the rain came in July it brought in its train countless millions

of locusts that cleared the landscape of every green leaf.

This year saw also the founding of our first cricket club, another step to civilisation, and also one sad retrograde movement intellectually in the total destruction by fire of the offices of the *Nor'-Wester*. Two of the Company's ships, the *Prince of Wales* and *Prince Arthur*, unfortunately, grounded on the shores of Mansfield Island, at the western end of Hudson's Straits, and Captain Sennet and two of his officers passed through the colony on their way home.

#### 1865.

The locusts of last year had left their legacy of eggs in the proportion of something like sixty to one. They lay these in little white silklike bags a few inches beneath the ground, where in some marvellous way they defy the frosts of a whole winter. They came to life in countless, unimaginable multitudes. No green thing got beyond the budding stage, and the sap was drawn from everything that attempted to live into the summer. Potatoes, cabbage, onions, and even horseradish were included in their bill of fare, and sometimes they even fell upon each other, so that the

stench from the heaps of dead became a serious evil, and we had to take them in cart-loads to the river. On the 13th June the new Governor of Rupert's Land left the fort to hold his first council at Norway House, accompanied by his nephew, Mr. J. J. Hargrave, as private secretary. The Venerable Archdeacon Cochran, who had done much missionary work throughout the entire length of the colony for the past forty years, left the scene of his long labours for Canada, with the full intention of not returning. Arriving there, his health failed him, and he at once returned, but only to die suddenly. He was buried beneath the shadow of St. Andrew's Church, hard by, which he laboured to build many years ago. He was succeeded in his archdeaconry by the Rev. J. McLean, of King's College, Aberdeen. Bishop Anderson had been succeeded by the Right Rev. Robert Machray, also an Aberdonian Fellow and Dean of Sidney College, Cambridge, and Vicar of Madingley. On the first Sunday in Advent he introduced a weekly system of offertory in all his churches, a unique parochial alteration.

Great alarm prevailed at another visit from the Sioux Indians. It was evident that they were driven on our soil by the United States

troops, and we were in constant fear of a massacre from them.

Much excitement was caused by the dissolution of partnership in the firm of McKennay & Co. The half-brothers were at each other's throats in the quarterly court. Dr. Schultz, our doctor-editor, was always in the law-courts. Now he claimed £300, and accused the Company bitterly of injustice because it was refused him. The worthy doctor seemed to have registered a vow to smash Charles II.'s "worthless charter" to atoms. It was evident enough to all who cared to watch him carefully that he had come to the colony with a genuine heart and disposition to do good for it, but he was filled with the frenzied ambition of youth, and feeling conscious of a grievance, his revenge expressed itself in a tempest of hatred and fury against the Company. I asked him once why he was so fond of airing his grievances in the law-courts; was it by way of advertisement? "No," he said; "it is because I have them, and shall continue to have them until the country is better ruled." I advised him to stick to his grievances; few of us can be happy without them. The jury decided against his claim, however, and Dr. Schultz described the court as having been "bullied and browbeaten by

the defendants, so that it had neither the will nor the power to do justice."

About this time an unfortunate affair occurred at Fort Rae, on the Mackenzie River, two thousand miles away. A shipmate of mine, W. T. Smith, was accused of having shot one of his men, whether accidentally or not could not be determined, as no witnesses had been present. Some domestic jealousy had existed, and this, along with an attempt of Smith's to cast the blame on some innocent Indians, led to his being tied with cords and brought to the fort. He was formally tried, but, the evidence being found insufficient, he was allowed to leave the country. But such incidents provided a text for those whose aim it was to cast discredit on the Company's government.

The lake fisheries turned out well this autumn, but the buffalo hunt was a complete failure, owing to the presence of the Indian refugees on the hunting grounds. The result was a great scarcity of food, especially among the French-Canadian half-breeds, who lived chiefly on pemmican, dried meat, etc., and trusted much to the buffalo hunt.

Excitement arose in autumn over a rumour that gold existed in paying quantities about Vermilion Lake, in Minnesota. Nothing

further was reported, however, than "surface indications." Many of the young settlers were anxious to proceed to these diggings, but they soon found out that the only accessible route was both circuitous and very difficult, so that the scheme for emigration to Vermilion Lake from the Red River soon fell to the ground.

## 1866.

Skirmishes with and among Indians provided interest for 1866. Three respectable American citizens carrying on business at the Prairie Portage were cruelly attacked by a band of Salteaux Indians. The red men demanded liquor of them, and being refused, proceeded to carry off some buffalo robes that lay in the store. The Americans, whose names were Salmon, Clewitt, and O'Lone, defended their property with clubs, and beat off the Indians. They soon returned, however, armed with guns, and when one of the white men came out of the store an Indian placed the muzzle of his gun against his breast and fired. Another was cruelly cut down with the scalping knife, seeing which his partner fired on the Indians, killing one on the spot. The Indians then retired into the bush, firing as they went.

An unfortunate stabbing affray also took

place in the fort, in which a Salteaux Indian was killed. His assailant, a French half-breed, was banished to New Caledonia.

The Sioux chief "Standing Buffalo" sent a band of his fellows to the fort for provisions, and also to ask advice as to the probability of their being allowed to return to their old hunting grounds. Having received both food and counsel, the wild Minnesota murderers returned highly pleased. A few miles on their journey they were attacked by a band of Chippewayans. Four were shot, and the rest fled for their lives, and only escaped through the protection of a band of brave settlers who had seen the skirmish.

About this time the ever-to-be-remembered Thomas Spence arrived upon the scene, with no smaller a task before him than our annexation to the United States of America. Finding this beyond him, he went sixty miles west, and began drawing the boundary lines of a new province he thought of forming, meanwhile demanding duties of all merchandise entering his domain. By-and-by there entered his mind the happy thought of writing an invitation to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to pay the colony a visit, also to the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, then Secretary of State for



Foreign Affairs, asking his advice on state matters relative to the new undertaking, and signing himself President of the Council. His meteor flight was soon over, however, and we heard of him trying to make a living at Salt Springs, near Manitoba.

- 1867.

Again the locusts arrived in their hosts, clearing the ground of grass, vegetables, grain, nay, of every green and growing thing; and again we had a glimpse of the great world in a visit of the Earl of March and E. Hill, Esq., who stopped to secure native servants and necessary apparatus before setting out buffalo and bear hunting in the Saskatchewan valley.

Meanwhile Sheriff McKennay's nucleus of a village had been extending, and now a cluster of houses grouped themselves upon the plain, looking rather like a colony of seals with their young reposing on an ice floe. No village street was there, no road, except the old cart track that leads only to the Rocky Mountains, a thousand miles away. But as the village grew the ideas of the inhabitants expanded likewise, so that when a Dutchman of the name of Emmerling established the first billiard table, an importation from the land of Uncle

Sam, it need hardly be said how well the investment paid. Then followed the establishment of a Burns club, if I mistake not by the same man, and the members of the club met, of course, at a dinner on St. Andrew's Day. Unfortunately, an altercation arose as to the comparative excellence of highlands and lowlands in Scotland, and soon the festive gathering became a riot. At that time there was only one constable in the entire colony. His name was Mulligan, but which side he favoured during the fight I cannot say.

The steamer *International* was busy all this summer in fetching up goods from the United States, chiefly the property of private individuals anxious to speculate a little in fur trading before the Company's charter quite ceased to exist. Evidently the *Nor'-Wester* had its public, if not in the colony, in the vast domains of our wealthy neighbours. These traders made the village on the plain their headquarters, and there drew up plans for invading our territory north, east, and west, as if the old days of the rival companies had returned upon us again. All our powers could not prevent these intruders from forcing their way into the very heart of the fur country. All we could do was to follow them up, and this we did most

closely, though aware that the conditions of fur trading were being altered in spite of us. I was appointed sleuth-hound to follow the invaders on the east and west shores of Lake Winnipeg. My instructions were on no account to leave my quarry, two of the best Americans that ever lived, but to follow them everywhere and watch everything they did. In a log shanty, with a mud chimney in one corner, within sight of both parties, I made my preparations for the winter. I had a full complement of native runners, eighty Eskimo dogs, thirty thousand whitefish on spits, and six puncheons of Demerara rum warranted to kill at thirty roods, and with the first snow and ice in November I set out on the chase which was to last till the following May. The Americans were very friendly, and took it all in good part. One of them remarked to me one day, "This year we have bought out Russia's claim on the continent [Alaska], and we wouldn't miss it out of our pockets to buy you out too."

1868.

The year 1868 offered a fresh and vivid chapter in the history of that stirring and irrepressible individual Dr. Schultz. It was solely with a view to curbing the political

prancing of this descendant of the Vikings that Governor McTavish had appointed Mr. McKennay sheriff. But it was not easy to contrōl a man so precocious, so overflowing with life and energy. He was at home in every detail of the country's history, though in other respects his education was far from complete, notwithstanding the efforts of an Irish tutor whom some wave of circumstance had pitched into our midst. It was this tutor who in a phrase described the man: "Fate had manufactured a scoundrel out of material meant by Nature for a gentleman." He was now prosecuted by a London firm for a debt of £500, in connection with which so many damaging facts came to light that the Governor paid £296 out of his private purse to put an end to the matter. Truly he was a man without the most elementary conception of law and order. When his goods arrived he took personal oversight of their landing, and saw them safe within his store without paying duty; and when his brother the sheriff went next day to put execution on them, he not only abused him, but knocked the officer of the law about so ignominiously that he was glad to escape, and this notwithstanding the fact that the court had made out a civil

case against him. He was put in prison, but only to break out by the help of an oaken beam, which he used as a battering-ram, after which all that was left for him to do was to issue an "extra" of the *Nor'-Wester* celebrating his triumphant re-entry into liberty. It was a miserable episode, yet the man was in his way unique. He had pluck, perseverance, an indomitable spirit, and an unflinching faith in his own purposes.

The life of the colony was no doubt somewhat lawless. Shootings and murders were common, and the criminal received little or no punishment. But it was scarcely to be wondered at in an isolated district with no vestige of military authority, with but one policeman, and a frail wooden courthouse, which also served as gaol. The people were used to shootings and stabbings, and any attempt at adequate punishment would have failed utterly for lack of the support of public opinion, while the free-and-easy life had to such an extent become second nature that at any moment death would be preferred to confinement.

For the rest, a memorable hurricane, which destroyed much property and several lives, and another destructive descent of locusts, marked

the year. There was again a threatening of famine owing to the failure of the buffalo hunt, and the Governor and Council of Assiniboia collected £7,500 as a relief fund. Of this £3,000 came from England, \$600 from Canada, and £900 from the United States, while the Company's house in London devoted £2,000 to the same purpose.

Two American visitors we had, of widely differing ranks, but perhaps equally well known. The first was General R. B. Marcy, of the United States army, who paid a flying visit to Lake Winnipeg. He was Inspector-General of the North-Western Department, and was on his annual tour of inspection to posts within that circuit. He left us highly pleased with his reception.

Our other visitor was no less distinguished a person than Professor Sands, "the world-renowned magician and ventriloquist," who stabbed himself enthusiastically in the arm, and cheerfully invited anybody and everybody to discharge loaded pistols at his heart, all to the huge amazement of the unsophisticated settlers, who crowded the room to suffocation.

The winter was long and dreary, and I was again on duty as sleuth-hound. A monotonous task I found it, and the recollection of it is

like a nightmare of weariness, a whitefish boiled for breakfast, a whitefish roasted for dinner, a whitefish boiled for supper, straight on day after day for months, and nothing else happening. Let the reader fancy himself in the position, and form his own opinion. I have no wish to describe it. Yet I found some consolation in the marvellous scenes of winter beauty which I was privileged to see. These I rejoice still to remember. As far as my immediate business was concerned, the outlook was discouraging, for the introduction of the American steel trap seemed for a time to threaten the fur-bearing animals with extermination—an exaggerated fear, however, as the event has proved.

## CHAPTER IX.

### END OF THE CHARTER.

1869.

THE year 1869 saw the end of my Company's charter. This conclusion, as I have already indicated, had been in sight for some time, but, as usually happens, a single incident not specially startling in itself brought matters to a climax.

Early in the year two Red Lake Indians stopped at a tent inhabited by two women and four children of the Sioux tribe. They were hospitably received, and the household retired for the night without suspicion of harm. In the dead of night, however, the guests arose and murdered the whole family in cold blood, carrying off their scalps to exhibit in pride to their tribe. The affair attracted a great amount of attention, and confirmed the fast-growing opinion among the people that it was time some change was made in the method of government.



Meanwhile Messrs. Cartier and McDougall, two Canadian politicians, had been in England endeavouring to make some arrangement by which the territories hitherto under the control of my Company might become part of the Dominion of Canada. The Governor of Rupert's Land had also gone on the same errand.

The general impression now, however, was that the Company had done its work. Certainly I know of my own knowledge that the difficulties of governing had during the last five years become altogether insuperable. And whatever errors the Company may have committed during the two hundred years of its charter, no fair-minded person will deny the sincerity of its efforts for the good of the people. The natives of all tribes and dialects were kindly treated and kept in at least tolerable order. The Company sent the first white settlers to the country, and by these it was gradually developed. Notwithstanding the difficult climate and isolated position, routes were made by which its plentiful yield of furs could be exported, and thus the whole region was gradually opened up, with what result the world now knows. The Selkirk colony took root and grew under the Company's protection,

through it the gospel was preached among the savage tribes, and but for its long-continued sway the whole territory would as likely as not have fallen into the lap of the United States.

Indeed, I think I may claim that the Company has left a wonderful record behind it. This company of pioneers trading into Hudson's Bay saw and survived the decline and fall of French, Spanish, Russian, Dutch, and Portuguese in the Western Hemisphere. Its chief officers, I am proud to say, have been nearly all Highlanders, and a hearty tribute must be paid to the courage and endurance and undaunted enterprise of the men who have gained for the Company its unique place in the annals of British commerce. Its methods had advantages over those pursued in India, won also by Scotsmen. Clive and those who followed him by the aid of disciplined soldiers scattered and controlled the natives. No such method obtained with us. The relations with the Indians were always friendly; moral strength, and not physical force, was their motto. Our contest was with the forces of Nature: immense distances; isolation; the cruel severity of Arctic blasts. Living was rough, and food sometimes scarce enough. Even for tobacco, no less indispensable than food, an unsatis-

factory substitute had often to be found in birch bark or the insipid leaves of a shrub which only tantalised by provoking painful comparison. Often we were snowed up for months within the narrow limits of a fort, or set out to shoot big game with—shall I say?—the frozen mercury extracted from the bulb of the thermometer. Yet, surviving all difficulties for two full centuries, my Company preserved its influence and power to the end, and during the last year of its existence had 160 forts and posts, 60 chief factors and chief traders, 160 clerks, and 1,500 inferior servants.

Some of the earlier rulers of the Company deserve to rank among the really great statesmen—a position unfortunately that history shall never give them, so little is the magnitude of their work guessed at. A few names have won the recognition they deserve for the singleness of purpose, the zeal, the far-sightedness with which they have devoted themselves to the cause of the settlers and the natives. Chief among these is Mr. D. A. Smith (now Lord Strathcona), who has honoured me by accepting the dedication of these fragmentary recollections. As financier, diplomatist, and statesman, he stands first among our rulers. His unassuming manners won the affection of those

about him, and his force and earnestness-as a public speaker impressed those views upon his audience as effectively as any more pretentious eloquence. And perhaps I may be excused if in speaking of him I recall the soil from which I too spring. He is a Scot of the Scots, a true and admirable type of the old-fashioned, chivalrous Scottish gentleman.

The charter, however, was doomed, and the most honourable and third oldest corporation that the world has seen came to an end. That it had held out against forcible opposition from influential quarters may be easily seen from the following extracts. When Lord Palmerston in 1858 introduced the Bill for the transfer of the government of India from the East India Company to the Crown, he referred to the Hudson's Bay Company's territory, concerning which a Select Committee had the previous year drawn up a report in these terms: "One could easily imagine that a wilderness in the northern part of America where nothing lives except fur-bearing animals and a few wild Indians might be confided to a company whose chief function should be to strip the running animals of their furs and to keep the bipeds sober," showing, of course, that in India the case was different. In the

same session Mr. Gladstone spoke with greater directness and even greater severity. "There is," he said, "a large portion of the surface of the earth with regard to the character of which we have been systematically kept in darkness, for those who had information to give have also had an interest directly opposed to imparting it. Now the truth is beyond question that a great part of this country is highly valuable for colonisation purposes, and it is impossible to state in too strong language the proposition that the Hudson's Bay Company is by its very existence and its character the enemy of colonisation." Apparently Lord Palmerston thought the matter of slight importance; Mr. Gladstone thought it of much, and proved himself the more far-seeing of the two. Yet I am scarcely prepared to admit that he was altogether right, though perhaps his position became true as circumstances developed, and the lapse of the charter finally became inevitable.

There were troublous times in store for us, however, before matters were settled. On 23rd September I received a hurried summons to headquarters, where I was instructed to start at once for Point de Chêne under sealed orders, and test the feeling of the French half-breed

colony there. This I did, even changing my faith as soon as I reached my destination, and attending for the first time in my life the Roman Catholic church. There was little need for any such diplomatic perversion, however, for it was at once evident that the Company had ceased to be a power in the colony. The feeling of the people was not merely indifferent, but hostile, partly no doubt owing to the influence of the rush of strangers into the country, bringing with them the latest democratic ideas. I proceeded unmolested, however, to my further task of staking out land at the west end of the "Dawson Road," and marking on the posts "H.B. Coy.'s Land Claims." In the course of my journey I camped at St. Boniface, and there met Louis Riel. He was a fair type of his race, spare, with black hair and blue eyes, neither scrupulously clean nor well dressed. He spoke fluently in Cree, French, and English, the last with much of the accent of the others, and had a noble taste in Demerara rum.

The arrival of the Hon. Joseph Howe, a prominent member of the Canadian Parliament, caused indirectly some disaffection among the natives. A few Canadians who had entered the colony as surveyors gathered

about him, calling themselves "the Canadian party," and even after Mr. Howe had left Messrs. Snow and Mair, with the less enthusiastic Mr. J. S. Dennis, maintained the party, which we felt to be a somewhat dangerous combination. The natives had fancied the territory, including themselves, had been sold, and the more intelligent among them resented this as "worse than slavery." Careful and generous treatment, however, helped to prevent any risk of insurrection.

Meanwhile a series of petitions were written to England and Canada asking for a change of government. Some pled for annexation to Canada, some to the United States, some to England. But before anything could be done the chartered rights of the Company had to be formally surrendered to the British Government, in compensation for which they were to receive £300,000 and one-twentieth of the land. Some people thought this sum enormous, though it was a mere fraction of what the land by-and-by sold for; others declared that the Company had no legal right to either land or money, surely an absurd contention.

The day for the transfer was 1st December, 1869. Unfortunately, long before this date arrived Mr. McDougall, who had been

conducting the negotiations in England, was appointed at Ottawa to be supreme ruler of the colony. The people opposed him, refused him entrance, and, instead of making a triumphant entry, he found himself ignored, slighted, and repulsed, while the *Nor'-Wester* poured forth daily streams of vituperation, all directed against my unfortunate Company.

Early in November, my friend Louis Riel made his appearance at Fort Garry with one hundred men. To the inquiry of Mr. Cowan, the superintendent, regarding the nature of their visit, they replied, "To protect the fort." In vain did Mr. Cowan protest against being compelled to billet so many men inside the fort. Then followed public notices, proclamations, protests, from all quarters: Riel, Schultz, Snow, and Mair (the "friends of Canada"), and from McDougall, who by this time was in the United States. Meanwhile Riel had extended his guards to the town, patrolling its muddy streets, and by the 23rd the insurgents had grown so strong that they made Governor McTavish and Mr. Cowan prisoners in their own fort, and took possession of the Company's books and papers in their charge. A Major Wallace, a Scotsman, arrived from Mr. McDougall, but was ignominiously stripped



of his arms, and sent back to his master. The year ended with the issuing of proclamations, of very questionable authority, by J. S. Dennis, surveyor, who signed himself "Deputy Governor and Conservator of the Peace."

There can be no doubt that the conduct of affairs during these weeks was not such as to pacify the natives or to lead to an amicable settlement. The reason that prompted Mr. McDougall to approach the frontier when he did is a mystery. The move had a most irritating effect. And, as Governor, McTavish must surely have foreseen Riel's movement, or at all events expected, as I certainly did, that the half-breeds would have recourse to arms. Why had he not in Fort Garry a force equal to any emergency? In so acting he would not have been doing anything but what might have been done with the full approval of the Imperial and Canadian Governments, and he would have prevented the rumour, soon widespread in the country, that he was a consenting party to Riel's attack. It was no doubt unreasonable to hold him responsible for events that had happened during his serious three months' illness, but popular opinion is apt to be unreasonable, and in any case the captain of the ship is responsible for her course and her

fate. Had it been possible to reconcile the English and French half-breeds, the influence of the "Canadian party" would have been done for, and that of itself would have been sufficient to secure peace. This party was eager for war, and Surveyor Dennis and his friends were busy drilling the Swampy Indians in the stone fort. After a few months, however, the drilling ceased, the French provisional flag appeared on the walls of Fort Garry, and our *soi-disant* "Deputy Governor," after inditing a letter to Riel recommending speedy unconditional surrender, and expressing trust in that gentleman's "honour"—of which he had, alas! none—suddenly disappeared from view. Both he and Mr. McDougall, when all diplomatic ingenuity had failed, returned through deep snow to Ottawa. Riel and his comrade O'Donoghue pursued their schemes, and on their demand for the loan of a sum of money from Mr. McTavish being refused helped themselves by carrying off the safe, taking the keys from the accountant by force.

But salvation was at hand, though we knew it not, for in December I got an urgent letter bidding me send my two best dog teams, sledges; and drivers to the upper fort, that they might be sent with others to Georgetown

to meet and escort to the colony Mr. D. A. Smith (already referred to), one of the Company's own officers, who was coming as a special commissioner from the Government to restore peace in the country. He arrived on 27th December, two days after the other special commissioners from Ottawa, the Grand Vicar Thibault and Colonel de Salaberry. These gentlemen found us all in much excitement over the rumoured approach of ten thousand Sioux warriors, coming from the west to attack us. There was a saying, "Scratch a Sioux Indian, and you discover what an American savage is," so that our alarm was considerable. But, by the timely representations of a Scotch half-breed, they were induced to turn back, thus ending the last Indian scare under the Company's government. This man was accused by the Americans of having made much profit out of these Sioux Indians by purchasing from them gold dust and other wealth, the booty of the families murdered in 1861-2.

There seemed little prospect of my idea of reconciling the Scotch and French half-breeds being carried out. The "Canadian party" was for the moment in high favour with the English section, and their influence continually

widened the breach between the other two groups. Canada was discovering a new world, which would revolutionise its affairs, but this "Canadian party" was scarcely a wise or effective instrument in dealing with the situation. For they were masterful, if not abusive, and imagined to be belonging to a class that relieved them from the necessity of being just towards the natives, whom they took to be nothing!

1870.

The first meeting of the commissioners, held at Fort Garry under Riel's presidency, was attended by many of our ablest men, of all shades of opinion. Happily the questions at issue stood apart from those of ordinary politics, and one could not but feel that, whatever the actual result of the conference might be, its influence would go towards uniting the sympathies of the colonists with the Canadians, and help to produce a spirit of cordial co-operation in the task of developing the practically unlimited possibilities of the country. The conference was watched with interest and sympathy both in Ottawa and in London. "Let there only be an indication on both sides that a genuine effort is being made to come to a good understanding," said a pro-

minent colonist to me, "and all will end well." The nomination of three such men as the Grand Vicar, Colonel de Salaberry, and Mr. D. A. Smith, as representatives of Canada, was in itself a proof that the Government appreciated the importance of the situation. Each and all of the parties were agreed that Mr. D. A. Smith's tone throughout was friendly, calm, and dispassionate. His effort to secure the fullest measure of friendly intercourse between the natives and Canada, subject only to the claims of Imperial authority, was a statesman-like action the more surprising in a man who had spent most of his life isolated among the dreary rocks of Labrador. His masterly grasp of the situation was shown most completely at the mass meeting at Fort Garry in January, when he had the opportunity of expounding his views and plans. It was a critical moment, and when he rose to unfold his commission from Sir John Young before Riel, O'Donoghue, and other insurrectionaries, most of us expected to see him arrested, or even shot. Indeed, he was virtually a prisoner, and Riel himself had kept a sharp eye on all his correspondence. But his marvellous coolness and self-possession impressed the hot-headed natives and convinced them that their interests would be safe with

Canada. As his last resort, Riel charged him with being a Company man. It was true, but Mr. Smith at once offered to sever his connection with the Company if that would tend to a peaceful settlement of the vexed questions. But Riel, tactless and uncultured, had lost his influence, and Mr. Smith was master of the situation. He bore the chief part in the discussion regarding the Bill of Rights which was to be sent to Canada, and his coolness and Scotch sagacity alone prevented the collapse of the negotiations. At one stage O'Donoghue said to a supporter, "This man Smith knows too much for us. We must get rid of him, or the North-West cannot be either an independent republic or even a part of the United States. He is a friend of the half-breeds, and will be able to persuade them that union with Canada is to their interest," of which indeed he did persuade them very justly. I told a friend then he deserved a peerage and would win it some day, as he will.

It was understood that a very special desire had been expressed at Ottawa that Mr. Smith should take part in the commission, as he was known to be an expert in the subjects likely to be most prominent, as well as to be very thoroughly acquainted with the character of

the natives. But, do what he might, the "Canadian party" gave trouble, and January ended in wrangling, petitioning, free fighting, and Heaven knows what. Riel incurred the hatred of the "party" by persistently shutting them out from his counsels; and their intrigues, under the leadership of the untiring Dr. Schultz, became every day more daring and dangerous. Riel knew his rival's past history among us, and how by sheer physical bulk and some shrewdness he had bullied the Company and its law-courts for some eight years. So, rightly or wrongly, he and his "party" had him taken prisoner and lodged within the walls of Fort Garry, but in vain, for during the night he climbed the wall, and was again at large, saving Riel's credit for the time, for it was reported that that unscrupulous leader intended to have his blood. Being at liberty, he at once set about inciting the people to violence, and was so far successful, that even from the far-off portage La Prairie recruits crowded to his rendezvous in Kildonan church. But shrewdly foreseeing consequences, he refused to accept the responsibility of controlling these misguided people who had gathered at his call—a heterogeneous collection of Canadians, Norwegians, Swedes, Danes, Dutch,

German's, English, and Scotch, and their half-breeds, as well as representatives of three distinct Indian races: Crees, Salteaux, and Ojibways. Thus, leaderless, purposeless, shelterless (the thermometer stood at 55° below zero), the warlike camp, under the influence of intense frost and intenser fear, disappeared with extraordinary rapidity, vanishing in every direction except that which led to Riel's quarters in Fort Garry, eight miles off. They had one very ancient piece of artillery with them, which they left behind them ingloriously in their flight. Many of these brave soldiers scarcely stopped running till they had put the whole length of Lake Winnipeg, some three hundred miles, between them and their foe. Dr. Schultz himself cast not a glance over his shoulder till he was safe in Ottawa. And all this although Louis Riel had never moved from Fort Garry! The casualties at this extraordinary battle that never was fought were two in number, a couple of youths, Parisien and Sutherland, being killed. But for their deaths the whole thing would have been merely ludicrous.

It had a serious sequel, however, for Riel secured as prisoners some eighty of Schultz's soldiers and kept them in durance vile under



daily threats of death. Schultz having escaped, he looked for a scapegoat to take his place. One day, in some mood of folly—to regard the matter merely as a piece of policy—he took his revenge on the “Canadian party” by ordering out one Thomas Scott, a fine-looking young Scotch-Canadian, and having him taken outside the fort, blindfolded, and shot down in cold blood by six bullets without even the apology for a trial. It was a huge blunder. The colony was aghast. Riel had reached the highest point, and his rash, inhuman act paved the way for his descent. His subsequent relations with his soldiers were those of the tyrant shorn of power. They undertook to do whatever he told them; he told them to do whatever they liked.

To strengthen his hands to some extent, he started a newspaper called *The New Nation*, but it was only too clear that his fighting powers were at an end. He was a superstitious man, and declared that his luck left him when he shot Scott. Certainly it was then that his star began to pale. He was a man of strange and contradictory impulses; and, free from the ordinary restraints of society, he found in his own nature neither ballast nor control. He was utterly unstable; the mortal

enemy of the morning might be the trusted ally of the night. Scheme after scheme formed itself in his restless brain, each in turn pressed with enthusiasm, each in turn rejected with disdain. Much drinking and smoking had irreparably injured a temperament naturally highly nervous, and these habits grew upon him till he could not live without them. His moods became more and more capricious and uncertain, his passion more violent and unreasonable, his impulses more sudden and inconsistent. The last scene in the vivid drama of his connection with us soon came. In May Lieutenant W. F. Butler arrived, having made, by Colonel Wolseley's orders, a flank movement through the States. In his honour the Salteaux gave a big "pow-wow," the chief men present being Musk-koo-ann-ee, Namba or Sturgeon, Red Deer, Big Apron, Grey Eyes, Long Claws, and Big Bird. A few days later the gallant captain was furnished by us with men, provisions, and a large canoe, and started on his journey down the Red River, across Lake Winnipeg, and up the Rainy River to meet and report to the commander of the Red River expeditionary force. This force entered Fort Garry on the 24th without opposition. Riel

retreated to St. Boniface and thence to the United States. His soldiers and supporters vanished like snow in June, after having with their chief "enjoyed" in our fort nearly a year of continuous debauch. This was Riel's final exit from the stage of the Company's affairs. He appeared again years after in the midst of another political crisis, but I relate only what I myself was concerned in. After enjoying the Company's hospitality for a short time, Colonel Wolseley retraced his steps with his battalion of the 60th Rifles, leaving two battalions of Canadian Volunteers, one in each of our forts, to protect us alike from Riel and from Indian scares.

Now arrived Mr. Archibald, the newly appointed Governor. Coming as he did at the right time, and suitably preceded or escorted by military force, he received a hearty welcome, very different from the reception accorded to Mr. McDougall. He and his friend Mr. Dennis showed a lack of tact and of diplomacy in attempting to claim a position which would obviously be denied or grudged by the people. They should have seen that such an action would merely intensify ill-feeling, and that the crisis was emphatically one of those when nothing but an exhibition of Imperial military

force can preserve peace. The so-called "Canadian party" was by this time so weakened in numbers as to be powerless. Happily the time has long come when there is the fullest sympathy in Canada with Imperial policy and aims. It is unfair to blame my Company for the disturbances. The land had ceased to be theirs since the transfer, and their control was consequently weakened, and nominally, indeed, at an end. The mistake, it has always seemed to me, lay with the authorities at Ottawa in neglecting to consult the people who were to be affected by the change. It was precisely here that Mr. D. A. Smith showed the wisdom and grasp of affairs which in reality saved the situation and brought the matter to a satisfactory issue.

Early in the year, in fact on 17th May, my friend Governor McTavish had left the colony for ever, broken down in health, and worn beyond recognition by the troubles he had encountered. He was emphatically a man *sans peur et sans reproche*, a man whose name was accepted everywhere as a synonym for disinterested integrity.

He died immediately on his arrival in Liverpool, to the sorrow of all who had known or served under him. Adieu, William the Just!

## CHAPTER X.

### TWO YEARS ON THE SASKATCHEWAN PRAIRIES.

APPARENTLY I was born to rove, and, these stirring events over, I gathered my belongings together and set out for the great prairies of the west. "You are going to have the great sensation of your life," said a friend as he bade me farewell, and indeed, it proved a true prophecy. For the first night alone on the limitless prairie is an experience never to be forgotten by any man of imagination or feeling. But of that anon. I had a few preliminary miles to travel. My outfit consisted of a horse and buggy, two guns, ammunition, a blanket, a few pounds of flour, tea, and salt. My steady horse, well named "Rock," deserves a word to himself, for a faithful and affectionate companion he proved himself during two lonely years in the wilderness. He was brown and of ordinary height. His chief peculiarities were the depth of his chest and his large belly, excellent features in view of the work in store for him. He trotted delightfully ten miles an hour, and

walked slowly, and was most docile. His eyes were hazel, the most beautiful I have ever seen. With a last look at the white walls of the stone fort where I had spent so many stirring years, I turned my horse's head towards Winnipeg, a town now getting notorious for its gambling houses and drinking saloons, two of which were kept by outlawed desperadoes from the States. Rowdiness was rampant, there being in the town a great number of youths from Ontario, who came with great expectations, but little inclination to hard work. To send such youths alone to a new country is merely a species of moral murder. The bulk of them never got further than the saloons or "Brown's Bridge," where they sat sulkily all day, dangling their legs over the parapet, and surveying their own unprepossessing reflections in the water. These are the men who do harm to a new country by sending home bad accounts of it, when they have really only themselves to blame. Then they become "remittance men," screwing money out of their people at home. I remember one of these who persuaded the saloon-keeper to write to the long-suffering father telling him his son was dead, and asking him to send on money for the funeral. The father, probably only too glad, forwarded the

required sum, thanking the writer for the care he had taken of his late boy. Shortly afterwards another letter from the "late boy" arrived, denouncing the former communication as fraudulent, and, as usual, asking for money. The father, however, answered curtly, that having buried his son once, he declined now to have anything to do with his ghost.

But to press on with my journey. The old trail followed the left bank of the Assiniboine, passing through level land, with here and there cultivated fields and patches of woodland. Portage La Prairie lay sixty miles from town. Beyond it I entered a fine country, low-lying, dotted with lakes and marshes, full of wild-fowl, and studded with aspen copses. Here I saw many buffalo skulls dried by age and exposure. At this point the road divided into two, the branches, which were called the north and south trails, becoming one again many miles away beyond Shoal Lake. I took the north branch, which brought me to the Little Saskatchewan River, a clear stream, the western boundary of the province of Manitoba—and of civilisation. A few mounted police are stationed there to intercept all spirituous liquors, which may not be carried beyond this point without a Government "permit."

Here I entered the void, calm, waveless, prairie-ocean, and felt as never before what it meant to be alone. The evening was beautifully fine; not a breath of wind was stirring; the sky was deeply tinged with gold, and the atmosphere had the light purple hue associated with the sunset hour of a serene harvest or Indian summer day. The last traces of husbandry had been long left behind. Not a glimpse was now to be had of the wooded lands by which I had so long been shut in. The sun appeared a broad flash of glorious crimson light, stretching upwards to the zenith, and reflected on the small lakes, where waterfowl sported and fluttered. In the willow bushes and aspen copses birds chirped and sang. The scene to me was as new as it was impressive. In my boyhood I saw the sun drop beneath the waves of the Atlantic. In youth I saw it sink behind billowy masses of foliage. Now it went down among the undulating waves of prairie grass. The stars came out one by one, and gradually the colours melted and fused and changed till night had come, and all the array of planets ranged themselves in the dark blue heavens. The night scene when the full moon rose was so glorious that it was not possible to think at all, merely to lie still and drink



in sensations of exquisite pleasure. The sun appeared in the east before I was weary.

At early dawn I heard a distant noise, unearthly, weird and horrible, and far across the level prairie I saw an approaching train of Red River carts. Hundreds of them there were, covering miles of the track as they followed each other in single file. They were drawn by Red River horses and oxen, and some by milch cows, Indian ponies, American oxen, mules, an ass, and a couple of large donkeys. Horrible was the dry creak of the ungreased wooden axles. As the procession passed the groaning was appalling. Some of the carts were returning from the summer plain hunt, others from long freighting trips, lasting as long as one hundred and fifty days, to Edmonton, Fort Pitt, Green Lake, and Fort Carlton, on the Saskatchewan. The harness used was exceedingly primitive, being made of ox or buffalo hide, raw and undressed.

On learning that I was bound for the Saskatchewan country the wagoners put their hands to their mouths—their gesture of dismay—and one of them exclaimed, “There are so many Sioux Indians along your path. You will be killed sure.”

“Only once,” I replied, and drove on into the unknown.

Prairie chicken were abundant along the trail, and love of sport, I must admit, sometimes tempted me to shoot more than my extraordinarily vigorous appetite could consume—three brace being the daily apportionment. After crossing the Little Saskatchewan I could see that the country was gradually attaining a greater elevation. Riding Mountain, running east and west on the north side of this plateau, is an excellent natural protection from the Arctic winds. The soil is a rich black loam, very fertile. I saw in it, as I drove along, a future "garden of the west." Yet these lands develop slowly. It was not till the end of April, 1871, that the first batch of immigrants reached Winnipeg, and though many have arrived since then, they too often return disgusted with the country and its droughts, floods, and pests of grasshoppers and locusts. These seem to have been worse ever since the year of Riel's rebellion—worse, certainly, than during my years in Fort Garry. Yet in one way I regard this as a blessing, because it gave the country time to recover gradually from its period of unrest. In fact, an immediate "boom" in immigration would have been a serious embarrassment. It took my Company some seven years to secure a cash

return for its trade in furs. An immigrant would, in the then state of the country, have to allow four years before he could hope for food return from his farm. Happily Nature does not work for her own destruction as men and nations seem at times to do. Yet if those who were "disgusted with the country" had gone on as far as these Saskatchewan prairies I think they would have shared my enthusiasm.

The prairies were gay with flowers, even at the season of my journey. Across the stretches of blue gentianella I saw a solitary Indian tent, standing at some distance from the trail. Rock saw it too, and wearier than I of the solitude, was soon at the door. There I found myself warmly greeted by one of my former Salteaux Indians, whose nomadic instinct had urged him forth, and left him for the moment lodged here in the wilderness. He entertained me royally, and having hobbled Rock, we feasted together on ducks, geese and prairie grouse.

Then off again over the endless prairie, each day like the former, yet without monotony. Crossing the Assiniboia about three miles above Fort Ellis, I left it to the right, and travelled for many days still through rich park.

land. Game was truly abundant. Lakes and pools swarmed with ducks and geese, and the prairie grouse filled the copses beside my path and covered the trail itself. Touchwood Hill, the Great Salt Plain, and the Wolverine Hills passed, I encamped at the foot of Spathanaw Watchi, a hill well known to travellers on the route, with a cross and a lonely grave on the top, from which five hundred miles of horizon view is obtainable.

It was late in October when I crossed the south branch of the Saskatchewan, here a stream of one hundred yards wide, flowing in a deep valley, with steep and wooded sides, cut into the level, sandy plain. The next day I reached Prince Albert's Mission Settlement, on the North Saskatchewan. The place is heralded by signs of quiet rather than activity. A rustic bridal procession was wandering vaguely to one of its places of worship as we entered the sleepy place, the happy couple marching in front. Then the parents of those culprits came behind arm in arm, and blushing at their position. I had travelled six hundred miles, and my steady and never-failing Rock was as fresh as when he started. In these regions a good horse in summer and good dogs in winter are the traveller's greatest boon.

1875.

Prince Albert's Settlement stood on the south side of the river, on the two lowest levels of its terraced bank, below the high slopes which long ago confined the stream before it had dug its channel so deeply. This North Saskatchewan is rather larger than the South branch, which joins it some thirty miles further on, but its general character and appearance are similar. The sources of these mighty streams are many hundred miles apart, high up among the Rockies, but the rivers have dug deep channels (sometimes three hundred feet down), and after some nine hundred miles each join their muddy waters for the final sweep eastward, through a deep gorge and into Lake Winnipeg, thence to reach eventually Hudson Bay. Beyond the northern branch is the vast forest which stretches right on to the barren ground near the Arctic circle. Beyond the southern lies the illimitable prairie, extending away into the Mississippi Valley. All the river lands, as I have said, I found rich and fertile in soil, as the luxuriant growth of wild pea-grass abundantly showed. As the welcome signs of husbandry and semi-civilisation came into view I felt that I had reached my winter quarters in this vast and silent land.

Mine host, Mr. A. Campbell, a dear brother, who had served the Company for many years, is an accomplished Indian linguist. When I visited him in his isolated post, he was not long married. His wife, *née* Miss Mary McKay, though a native, claimed descent through her Scottish grandfather from the head of the clan, Lord Reay. The settlement owed its origin to the late Rev. James Nisbet, a Presbyterian minister, who had established a mission station there in 1865 for the benefit of the Indians, and had named it after the late Prince Consort. Very soon afterwards many families, both Scotch and Scotch half-breeds, moved westwards from the Red River to the new settlement. At the time I visited it, however, the little Indian mission, set there in the wilderness for the ingathering of the heathen to Christ, had become so large as to include representatives of all the nations of Europe in its population. I could hardly believe my own ears when I heard the number of different dialects and tongues that were spoken in this the northernmost settlement on the continent ( $53^{\circ} 3' N.$ ).

"Pray how did you get so far north, and what do you expect to take back when you return to the old country?" I asked of a rather

untidy Irish itinerant, whom I chanced to find basking in the sun.

"Sure, your honour, if the North Pole be found out to-day, it's plenty of Irish and Scotch will be there to-morrow," was his reply.

As might be expected, the autumn frosts are the chief enemy of agriculture in this latitude, and the wheat crops occasionally suffer. But when the grain escapes the keenness of the night air, it is not—at least so far as I examined it—a whit behind the best grown in the Red River country: indeed it is a trifle heavier with the same golden hue. The community had at that time reached the number of a thousand souls, and was daily increasing. One remarkable thing was that <sup>all</sup> comers, young and old, seemed to be <sup>allowed</sup> by Nature to remain for an indefinite time. In a whole year no death had occurred.

The settlers had adopted the old Red River custom of running their lots two miles out from the river. Scotch settlers I found taking the leading place there as in so many other colonies. There seems no question but that the Scotch make first-rate colonists. Their courage, shrewdness, perseverance and sagacity tell with excellent effect in their battle with a new soil.

In one respect this colony differed greatly from that at the Red River. It was conducted on strictly temperance principles. This no doubt explained the extraordinary health and longevity of the community. But it must be admitted that the quantity of black Congou tea consumed was appalling. It was so strong and dense that the spoon might almost have stood upright in the cup. And under the influence of this decoction a night rarely passed without a ball or a wedding being announced in the place. The Red River custom of "fiddling and dancing and serving the devil" still survived, though under reformed conditions, which robbed the double shuffle and stamp dance of much of its vigour.

The community had plenty of wheat in store, but for the converting of it into flour they depended solely upon one rather Dutch-looking windmill which stood upon the river bank waiting patiently for days and even weeks for a puff of wind to turn its sails and give the people bread. But bread or no bread, they were ready to dance and be merry. A happy, careless life they led, planted there in the midst of a great continent, buried sometimes in five feet of snow, with the ground frozen other five feet below it and a wind of



sixty degrees below zero whistling overhead. And the dances went on, merrily all the time.

There were two churches and two schools, so that the settlers had a fair choice, not merely as to their own special route heavenwards, but as to whether their children should learn the Catechism of Prayer Book or the Westminster Divines. A few years before the time of which I write the Church Missionary Society had followed the example of the founders of the mission and sent an agent here, a Scotchman, the Rev. J. McLean, whom I have already mentioned. He had been a Presbyterian minister, perhaps one of those ambitious Scots whose aims even on earth soar high, for he ultimately attained the rank of a colonial Bishop. He was an erudite man and a notable orator—probably the finest in the continent, certainly in the Dominion. The Anglican Church was unquestionably to be congratulated on the possession of such a man. The Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Hugh McKellar, was an earnest, sincere and pious young man, with pretensions and no other aim but to preach Christ and Him crucified to his flock. One consequence, already visible, of the rapid growth of the settlement was the disappearance of buffalo from the neighbourhood. They

used to be found in countless numbers within a week's travel from the mission during the whole winter. This year we heard that they were far afield, in the prairie land between the two branches of the river, but far westward near the Rockies. Early in spring a party of us set out westwards from the mission. We were interrupted after the first ten miles, as the cart of one of my companions suddenly turned topsy-turvy, nearly suffocating the unfortunate Indian pony, which, confined by harness and shafts, was nearly buried in a mixture of water, snow and mud. Drying the load of furs and restoring the pony to its normal condition delayed us a few days—amid plenty of shooting. The lakes were full of ducks and the hillocks alive with running or with dancing grouse. This curious habit of dancing enabled us to secure a good many brace with very little trouble, as they are so engrossed in their steps that the approach of the hunter is not noticed. Every spring they assemble at sunset and sunrise in parties of three or four dozen at some favourite spot, generally a rising ground. They group themselves opposite each other, open their wings, place both feet together and hop solemnly back and forward like birds in a pantomime. Prairie grouse do not usually hop,

so the effect is all the more ludicrous. Their places of rendezvous are recognisable at once from the flattened grass, beaten down or worn away in a circular patch by the constant tread. The Indians place their snares in this circular ball-room and catch the dancers by the dozen. I watched them one evening assembling for the social hop, and proceeding to their steps to music of their own. I am afraid I broke up the ball in rather sanguinary fashion, perhaps excusable after lying in the cold and damp of the long pea-grass. Their crops were always full of a large blue flower, a kind of anemone which was in bloom at the time, and of which they ate greedily.

Two of my companions were of the Bois-brûlé variety and prided themselves not a little on combining in their veins the blood of six races—Scotch, French, English, Cree, Salteaux and Ojibway. We came across Chief Beardy, who also prides himself on his mixed descent, claiming a connection with the Scottish Highlands through an ancestor named Sutherland, one of the Company's servants, and so much of a Nimrod as to outdo the Indians themselves in hunting and so to be elevated to the chiefship with the usual endowment of six wives. Undoubtedly it was he who first conceived the

idea of impounding buffalo herds. The men, unlike other tribes, have all very respectable beards, a distinction which they attribute to their white blood and of which they are inordinately vain, wearing them as proudly as cockades. Chief Beardy was a fine-looking fellow, dressed in a spangled shirt, a cap covered with many coloured feathers and ribbons, and elaborately worked leggings and medicine bag. He proved to be a born orator, and pointing to me as the only white man present, he rose and made an oration in the Cree language. He delivered himself with the greatest ease and fluency, never hesitating for a word. He carried his head high and his gestures were graceful and dignified. The speech was full of references to "my poor country," "my poor buffalo," "both taken away from us," "What shall we do?" "What shall we eat?"

We travelled many days before we came upon the herd of buffalo, far away between the two great rivers, and nearly one thousand miles from my starting-point. When I first came to the country the buffalo herd reached eastwards to the Red River, close to Fort Garry, and westward to the Rocky Mountains, and was scattered north and south from Lake La Biche

to the Mississippi Valley, an area of a thousand miles each way. Within this space there lived some thirty thousand savages, all vigorously hunting buffalo for their sustenance. Yet the number killed for food was insignificant, compared to the number slaughtered for their robes and skins. My Company, I am able to say, acquired in a year as many as one hundred thousand robes. Half as many more would be accounted for by other traders, Indian requirements and waste. From boyhood it had been my ambition to see the great prairie herd, but I found only the fag end of it. I was told that the decrease was producing disastrous effects on the trade of the plains. But to the savages the extermination of their principal means of life must be the greatest disaster of all.

The herd we now encountered was large. All the party but myself rode old, well-seasoned buffalo runners. Rock had never seen a herd before, and I had trained him for trotting, not for running. Besides, he was only ten hands high, while I weighed fourteen stones. However, I joined the others, and girths being tightened and guns examined, we moved forward at a foot's pace, many filling their mouths with bullets. Our captain in the centre, we rode in a line, and gradually our pace became

a canter till within one hundred and fifty yards. Then, hurrah! *allez!* Away we went helter-skelter in a mad charge. I brought up the rear on little Rock, and as we closed with the herd it broke up into little bands of five, six or eight. A quick succession of shots and the slaughter had begun. Each man followed his own choice, leaving the dead animals to be identified after the run was over. An exciting chase undoubtedly. A handful of powder let fall from the powder-horn into the gun-barrel, a bullet dropped from the mouth into its muzzle, a tap with the butt end of the firelock on the saddle to cause the powder to adhere to the moistened bullet, and all the time galloping hard after the lumbering heavy animals with their humps and shaggy manes, their long beards and fringed dewlaps swaying from side to side, their keen, small black eyes rolling viciously as they glanced out of their mass of tossing hair, now under one shoulder, now the other, at the foe behind them. Considering the reckless nature of the sport, the heedless cross-firing, and the treacherous badgers' holes, it was remarkable how few accidents occurred, though indeed many horses and their riders have come to a violent end on these very prairies. The badgers' holes were the worst danger,

and were indeed a kind of provision of Nature for the protection of the buffalo, for often the fear of them held back the rider, and allowed the prey to escape.

My luck was poor. Rock completely lost his head in the excitement. The sight of the huge monsters careering madly along with fiery eyes and tossing manes, followed sometimes by an eagle-feathered savage, mounted on a strangely decked-out pony, with the scalp of his latest enemy flying behind him, utterly demoralised my steady-going, faithful nag, and he ran away with me down a steep brae, in spite of all my efforts, pitched me headlong against an enormous granite block, and himself fled madly over the prairie. Beneath the shadow of this boulder I lay in a semi-conscious state I know not how long, but I was roused at last by the sight of a large herd of buffalo coming full gallop over the crest of the hill above me, and making straight in my direction, followed by feathered Indians and hatless half-breeds, firing wildly from all directions and sending dozens of bullets whistling about my ears till I was deafened with the sharp sound. I got hold of my rifle, a repeating Winchester, took aim, and planted a patent pacificating pill in an immense bull, but alas !

not so as to kill him. As he turned upon me I arose and ran round my boulder, he after me, and so we chased each other for life and death. A bullet from the flint-lock gun of one of the savages hit the boulder and sent a splinter into my hand, leaving a wound of which I still carry the trace. Scarcely knowing I was hit, I ran on till my breath was almost gone, and I felt that in a few moments I should drop and be tossed and trampled by my infuriated foe. Suddenly a thought struck me. By this time I was chasing him, rather than he me—in fact I was close behind him. I raised my rifle as he swished his tail round, placed the muzzle against the soft skin, and drew the trigger with my last ounce of strength. I had won, and my already wounded enemy dropped dead. At least it had not ended as many such encounters do, when in a last paroxysm the wounded monster turns and tosses horse and rider into the air like dry chips, tearing them with his horns, stamping them to death with a dying effort, and then falling dead upon his victims.

About two hundred animals were shot down in that race. One of the Bois-brûlés identified twenty-three of his own shooting. The slaughter went on for many days, till the piles of refuse at each lodge door were as large as haycocks,



and the air was so contaminated that we had to change camp into a clean spot. Although the Indians had twice as much meat in hand as they could properly cure, the savage instinct of the chase was now so strong upon them that they could not let a herd pass the camp without leaping to their ponies to pursue it. Scores of animals were left untouched upon the ground, for the wolf and the worm. Truly, I thought, the time was coming when these wild races would sigh for the flesh-pots of Egypt in vain.

The climate was delightful. We lived in the open air under a cloudless sky, in the finest and most bracing atmosphere in the world, and for once the weather formed a topic of conversation in the camp. These prairie thunderclouds do not, as a rule, begin to gather from below the horizon, as is the case near the sea, but in the zenith. A black spot appears in the neighbourhood of the sun, and quickly increasing in size, soon covers the whole canopy of heaven. Occasionally the black cloud fades away without refreshing the arid land beneath. In that case the medicine-man and conjurer order out a large number of braves and cause repeated volleys to be fired towards the disobedient

cloud. This had been going on for several days, and the blacks who had been grumbling shortly before at the terrible heat— $120^{\circ}$  in the sun—were now complaining with equal bitterness of the lack of sunshine, the lowering skies, the heavy atmosphere, and the ever-threatening never-bursting cloud. Undoubtedly such weather is trying, and brings on headaches and smart attacks of pessimism. Even such past masters in the art of philosophic indifference as the medicine-man and conjurer yielded to the soporific influence of the atmosphere, and kept patients waiting for their awakening. But at last the storm burst—a record storm—and torrents of tropical force descended upon our camp. In the midst of thunder, lightning, and lashing rain the savages were out in full cry after a passing herd of buffalo. Yet not one of the slain animals was touched, for it is against their traditions to use meat killed at such a time. The sport of killing, however, was irresistible.

Having taken part in the hunt, I began to bethink myself of my further journey. I was sorry to leave them, ferocious and lawless as they were. The Indians seemed to have shared the uncontrolled spirit of the wild herds among whom they had lived for centuries, and the

half-breeds have drunk of the same wild freedom, paid little heed to the ministrations of good Father André of the Oblate Fathers, who accompanied them on this expedition. I could not but marvel a little at that good man's presence. He could do but little good. Perhaps he sought a means of self-discipline, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*.

## CHAPTER XI.

“RED CLOUD” AND “SITTING BULL”—INDIANS—  
A WINTER IN THE WOODS.

TOWARDS the end of June I found myself on the fertile soil of “Uncle Sam,” in the neighbourhood of the Yellowstone River. Bleached buffalo skulls strewed the prairie, but no live animals were to be seen. On the river bank stood an immense camp of Sioux Indians, ruled by the brave but notorious “Red Cloud.” “Sitting Bull,” I heard, was encamped up the Rosebud River Valley, with his braves in war-paint. This tribe alone could send out on the war-path six thousand warriors, and woe to the foe that should cross their path when the war-dance had fired their savage blood. A great deal of nonsense is talked about the value of military discipline as against the untutored courage of the savage. Of course, if the soldier is well fed, properly clothed, and in good health, and the Indian the reverse, there is little doubt where the victory will go. But soldiers have often to fight on empty stomachs,

without sleep, ill-clothed, and sickly. Hunger and sleeplessness are sore enemies to courage. The Indian, if his friend the bison is in the locality, is sure to be well fed ; the buoyant, free spirit of his independent life is in his nostrils, the hot blood of animal vigour is in his veins, and he has but one idea—that of fighting to the death. Then the victory is not always to the white man.

“ Injuns,” says an American humourist, with expressive brevity, “ is pison ; ” and that is, on the whole, the average American judgment of the red man. Yet it must be confessed that the dwindling survivals of the race which once held sway over the entire North American continent have not proved a very deadly poison to the paleface. Occasionally the old fighting propensity flashes out as among the Sioux of Minnesota, as when “ Red Cloud ” and his six hundred braves dashed down on the unfortunate Fetterma’s troops from the lower ranges of the Wyoming mountains and left not one to tell the tale. One is tempted occasionally to sentimental regrets over the disappearance of the “ noble savage ” before the encroachments of the stranger. Yet such regrets are vain, for the event was inevitable. The truth is that the red man is incapable of civilisation, and

since he cannot progress with it he must be crushed under its weight.

Never was this so strongly brought home to us as on that June day when we strolled slowly up the Rosebud Valley in the glorious sunshine. The hill in front of us was dotted with white patches, for which I could not account. In early spring they might have been lingering snowdrifts, but just now, impossible! We went nearer, nearer still, gazing with a growing intensity and horror. They were the nude—absolutely nude—bodies of the troopers of the 7th United States Cavalry, with their officers and their rash but much-loved leader, General Custer, slain to a man, and mutilated beyond recognition by “Sitting Bull” and his braves. There they were, left to the wolves, the worms, and the fowls of the air, the last Indian fighters, let us hope, in the United States service. For assuredly the work of scalp-knife and tomahawk on 25th June, 1876, was of a kind to be long remembered, an object lesson, let us hope, to the Canadian authorities which might teach them to avert such tragedies on their side of the boundary. It had been thought that all previous differences between the Sioux Indians and the Americans had been long since forgotten! The sight of these bodies

was shocking in the extreme. I knew only too well what had happened, familiar as I was by this time with the Indians and their ways. After the scalps had been torn off, the most horrible and devilish barbarities had been committed upon the bodies. Then, when the warriors had ended their task, the squaws came to snatch a laurel from the victory, and adorn themselves with the remains; gnawing and tearing the flesh like dogs, in a brutal frenzy of revenge. Then, in a delirium of ghastly triumph, the war-dance and other mysteries began, and these ceremonies ended, they squatted down together to a delicious preparation of American flesh, which no doubt satisfied stomach and conscience alike. Eye-balls were dried and strung on a thread to adorn the squaws' necks; teeth were used as rattlers on the war music-drums. An appalling spectacle truly. Who can ever forget it?

As to the question of blame, I am in doubt whether the responsibility should be laid more heavily upon the untaught savage-natured Indian than upon the rash and imprudent officers who thus annihilated their troops, and whose explanation and exculpation—if any—perished with them. Custer was a brave man, generous of life and no doubt confident of

victory. But he certainly acted madly and recklessly in rushing upon a camp of savages with no plan but to hew them in pieces. Indians are not without their share of strategic ability, and soldiers are not invariably successful against them, though the outside world may not hear of the failures. But it is not possible to judge justly without information, and though I have admitted that the red man's savagery is ineradicable, and that he must eventually cease to exist, I am at least able, after living, talking, camping with them, sharing their life and their language, to recognise and state his grievances. Whole camps existed in semi-starvation on Government doles, a state of things which arose simply out of the smart dealing on which civilisation prides itself. The Government offered to buy the land from the Indians, that meaning of course the end of their one means of life, buffalo hunting. In payment they were to receive so many pounds of pork, beef, flour, tea, sugar, tobacco, blankets, cloth, guns, ammunition, etc., all of which, expressed in round numbers of dollars, seemed enormous beyond comprehension to a savage only capable of counting his ten fingers. To him it seemed that each pound avoirdupois equalled a buffalo bull, and



each dollar's value as much as his pony could draw in a cart. The chiefs in council expressed the matter with characteristic brevity: "Pork is fatter than our beef; flour we have not in our land; both are good to eat, and in such enormous (?) quantities must be better than our own beef." A treaty was signed, and the contract secured by unscrupulous political hangers-on whose chief aim in life was to make money out of the "hit" at the Indians'—or anybody's—expense. By-and-by the supplies began to reach the camp—a modicum of inferior stuff, causing only disappointment and vexation of spirit. I do not hold that the savages were absolutely innocent and unsuspecting—that would be to censure the other side perhaps too heavily—but certainly they were no match for civilised politicians. Yet these politicians would have shown themselves wiser in showing themselves less clever. The treaty with "Red Cloud" and "Sitting Bull" was not planned by the wisest. It certainly was the beginning of the 1861-2 affairs, followed by Fetterma's and closed by Custer's annihilation.

The Sioux Indians were of splendid physique, active, bold, and warlike, far superior to the tribes in the North. "Sitting Bull" and "Red Cloud" were giants in a tribe of giants. The

stars of the first magnitude which revolved about these dusky suns marked their distinguished rank by allowing their finger-nails to grow like eagles' claws, by encircling their heads and wrists with wreaths of grizzly bear claws from the Rocky Mountains, and by wearing rich robes in council and in times of war. Even when *attired* in all their state adornments they were far from being the gloomy and hideous creatures, with wrinkled brows and fierce eyes, that some imagine. Their faces showed strength and keen intelligence, but they were a gregarious race, and had a genial and social side scarcely guessed at by those who knew them only in their wars and massacres. Under the influence of patriotism these men carried valour to its highest point. And if the evil and barbarous elements often seemed to predominate over the good, can it be wondered at, considering how their land was filched from them for an unsatisfactory equivalent? No man who knows right, says Milton, "can be so stupid as to deny that all men were naturally born free." Indeed, in the dreams of natural rights, in the rainbow vision of an inalienable claim to be left free in life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, there is something that has for

centuries, from age to age, evoked a spontaneous thrill in the hearts of toiling, suffering, hopeful men—civilised or uncivilised—something that they need no philosophic book to teach them. When the American General came upon their native soil he found the Sioux warriors breathing the spirit of conquerors. The whole atmosphere was changed; logic began its barbarous work, turned into a strange poison. The savage instinct did not rest until they had drained first principles to their very dregs—nay, argued down from the necessities of abstract reasoning, until they had ruined all the favouring possibilities of concrete circumstances! For ever, against Custer's force, "Sitting Bull" had now written in his heart the judgment written of old on the wall against Belshazzar. "We must," said Oliver Cromwell, "annihilate the intruder, or he will annihilate us"—in Dreamland.

After this trip to the country of the Sioux I returned to Prince Albert's Settlement, but remained there only a very short time. In October I set out for Sandy Lake, sixty miles north of the Saskatchewan River, where I proposed to winter. My second day out I came upon an immense camp of Indians. They had been called together for the purpose

of arranging a treaty with the Canadian Government, whose Commissioner was the Hon. A. Morris, Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba. I stayed a few days watching the proceedings, in which by that time I naturally took a very special interest.

If it were nothing else, the cool tenacity of purpose with which Chief "Beardy" faced the Commissioner, with his three-cornered hat and gold lace, might have borne witness to the descent from a "canny Scot" of which he boasted. Except a cloth about his loins he was absolutely naked, besmeared all over with the light yellow clay of his native soil. Clothed thus in native dignity, he harangued the Commissioner for four hours without pausing for a word. "Yes," he cried, pointing to Mr. Morris with a hand not over clean, and adorned with mourning borders round the tips of the nails, "I am here before you very proud because I am covered with a thin coat of my own ground. It is more precious to me than that fine coat you wear, though it is fringed with gold. What are you come for into my land? You can see many fine things in it. Overhead is the warm sun, shining out of a bright sky, which has no speck or stain to spoil the crystal clearness of its blue depths—you have nothing

like it in your country. Its golden rays flash and shine as in a thousand glassy mirrors on my lakes and rivers throughout all my land. Out of one of these lakes, far away below where the sun is, come all our buffaloes, which have fed ourselves and our forbears for thousands of years. If you take the country from us, that sacred good lake will refuse to give me any further supply of buffaloes. For this reason you will go back to your own land without getting mine. What would you say if I were to go to your country and ask to be master of it?

“You give us beef to eat now, but it makes us ill. And even this will only last while you are trying to get our land. When that is done you will go away and forget us and our families. This is my land, and you have no right to it.”

There was, perhaps, in his eloquence, a tendency to incoherent rhapsody, but there was no question as to the definiteness of his intention. Mr. Morris, also of Scotch blood, eyed the savage with evident admiration. The untutored orator, however, excelled rather in speaking than in hearing, for whenever Mr. Morris introduced a legal phrase—even through the interpreter Erasmus—the dusky brow was

knit, and the puzzled eyes showed how little he understood what was being said, and how much he would have liked a little elucidation. But none was forthcoming, and he and his braves sat patient and uncomprehending, their long hair hanging lank over shoulders and back, and their mouths wide open—as, indeed, they always were, except when mastication was actually going on. They were painfully awkward, with an awkwardness which was not in the least self-conscious, proving that they had not even a sense of the “humanities” which they lacked. Yet their keen eyes were a redeeming feature in faces by no means over intelligent, far less so than the Sioux of the South. “Beardy,” however, could make himself a somewhat embarrassing barrier to progress, and he stolidly refused to “let go,” or enter into any treaty for the present.

Having left “Beardy” behind, we reached Fort Carlton, where I found, on the face of a br e, the lonely grave of my shipmate from Bernera, who had shared my first shipboard prank in climbing the rigging of the *Prince of Wales* on our outward journey in 1859. When my train of five horses, with four carts and a buggy, had crossed the river, we camped on its north bank. The weather was beautiful, and the days

pleasantly warm. The nights, however, were beginning to be very keen, and the lakes were already covered with their first thin coating of ice. That night, like Nebuchadnezzar of old, I was troubled with restless dreams, the result of long, sorrowful musings beside my old companion's grave, and "my sleep brake from me." I jumped up hastily and went out. As there was no process of undressing on retiring, all trouble of dressing was also saved. I walked back and forward on the level prairie, shaking off the effect of the evil dreams. When about a quarter of a mile east of the camp a huge, shaggy animal of great length of body, but with very short legs, appeared over the bank. I was unarmed, and totally unprepared for any such emergency, and was therefore glad to retreat as gracefully as might be possible, keeping my face to the foe, and backing out of his august presence. But suddenly I heard a low, stifled roar behind me, and turning my head in terror, I beheld another monster, as large as the first, right between me and the camp. There was no time to deliberate. I jumped the high sandbank, and made for the water's edge, knocking against tree trunks and boulders in my flight, for I had discovered that my visitors were an old pair of grizzly bears.

So much for evil dreams! My only thought, as I hastily stripped for the plunge into the cold Saskatchewan and the swim to the fort side of the river was—would they follow? I was exhausted after my run, and I stood hesitating, unclothed, in the keen air of dawn, waiting for the next move of my enemies. Bears are not particularly shrewd as beasts of the field go, and are often content to get a man's clothes and tear them to bits, apparently quite unconscious that they are not slaying their enemy in doing so. So I left my outer presentment on the bank, and stood ready to plunge if they appeared. It was a long and a chilly wait, but with the first signs of sunrise I took heart, dressed, and returned to camp for my rifle and set forth for the spot where I had first encountered my foes. But nothing could be seen except the prints of their huge feet travelling northwards. Moral, never go out unarmed. A fine text for a sermon in the old days at home! The wise virgin has oil in her lamp—and the wise hunter his gun on his shoulder.

My men went on with the carts and cayooses, while I remained behind with Rock to take a last look at the fort, this last outpost of civilisation, standing on the very spot where



McKenzie, Simpson, and Franklin had stood ere they penetrated the unexplored forests to the north. As I hurriedly followed my transport I was struck with the rich and fertile country through which I passed. Clumps of poplar, interspersed with birch and pine, dotted the undulating surface of the plain, the foliage being beautifully tinged with the reds and yellows of autumn, mingled with the natural blue-green. The trail was winding enough to please any Chinaman—if it is true, as they say, that a straight line is an abomination to the Chinese; but I came up with the men as they were unhitching for dinner, and taking my rifle I set out for a stroll through the thicket. In a small open space I noticed what looked like two boards standing up out of the grass. As I crept forward the things moved. All at once I realised that it was a moose deer, and getting within sixty yards I lay down and taking a steady aim drew the trigger, and the cream-coloured antlers disappeared. It proved to be a very large buck, and blood was oozing from a bullet-hole exactly between the horns. We emptied one of the carts, intending to put all the meat in it the next day in the green hide, and then we settled down for a feast on the camping ground where we had

dined. In the morning, however, the whole animal had mysteriously disappeared, and on examination we saw plainly that two grizzly bears had carried off the huge buck to a distance of some fifty yards, and had there had a glorious feast. Probably they were the same two as had intruded upon my meditations before. On the whole I think I had treated them generously. If they let me off easily on the river bank I had at least proved no stingy host to them.

The wild fowl had all taken their winter flight to the Gulf of Mexico or some part of sunny South. Only a few stragglers remained, and they were tolerably certain to suffer for their procrastination, for, being too fat to rise on the wing, they would be ignominiously frozen.

The next day we travelled through the territory of the chief Mistaa-waa-sis, who, after sharing a hearty meal with us, invited us to winter with him and his people. We had to decline his hospitality, however, and press on. In four days we arrived at Sandy Lake, in the land of the big burly chief Ataa-kaa-koop, or "Star Blanket," to whom I explained my desire to pass the winter on his land. Unlike Mistaa-waa-sis he was inclined to

make terms. "Yes," he said, "if you pay me for so doing." "No," I replied, "you sold your land to the big man in the gold-laced coat, and you have no further claim to it." Eventually, however, I was so delighted with his urbanity that I agreed to give him a trifle.

The untiring Rock, who had been in constant work under saddle or harness since April, had now to share the fate of the Indian cayoose, and scrape his food from under the snow during the winter. I had little fear but that with his extraordinary appetite and equally extraordinary digestion he would turn up all right in the spring. For our winter abode we had a rude enclosure sixteen feet by eleven, made of rough pine logs which by no means lay in apposition. These were roughly mortised together at the corners of the hut. The interstices between them were filled up with moss and clay. The roof was covered in by dry poles, and over these we threw marsh grass, mud and snow. A mud chimney poked itself out at one side, and a parchment window put the finishing touch to our winter quarters.

Not far from here a Mr. Treemiss wintered in 1862-3, and "Star Blanket" still retained many stories of him. About a mile away there was a mission-station of the Church Missionary

Society in charge of a Mr. J. Hines, a very earnest man, evidently sincerely desirous of doing good to his fellow-men. I went to service one day and noticed that in the middle of the English-Indian discourse the chief and some of his braves became uneasy. By-and-by they filled their pipes, lit up, and soon the whole building was full of a thick cloud of tobacco-smoke—a sufficient sign that, convert and reform as you will, make them Anglicans, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, they remain Indians still.

The discourse was a somewhat literal and matter-of-fact account of the Creation and other portions of Old Testament history. They listened quietly while the interpreter told them that the universe was made in six days; that the Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day; that the serpent talked in human language to a woman named Eve. But when he assured them that the first generations of men lived a thousand years there was a deep sound of "O hoo, O hoo, neet-chee, neet-chee," indicating dissent and incredulity. The statement that God in anger drowned the whole race of man was allowed to pass, in that land of floods and mighty rivers, but to the story that Balaam's ass (a kind of horse with long ears) spoke in human

language on being struck with a stick, there were again cries of "O hoo, O hoo," while the story of Jonah and the whale fairly brought out the pipes and tobacco. Apparently they thought it was to be taken as a camp-fire yarn. When "Star Blanket" consented to be baptised, and appeared in church in Spartan simplicity, wrapped in a white blanket not too clean, he and his braves, becoming impatient at the length of the preliminary service, filled their pipes, and beguiled the time by stolidly puffing forth clouds of smoke.

As I did not smoke myself, I left the "smoking concert" and went out into the night, where I spent my time looking at my friends the stars, and wondering idly what was going on in the sword of Orion, and whether stones fell upward there and parallel lines met. It would be a good thing if missionaries would follow the example of John Campbell, who penetrated Africa in 1813 simply to study the necessities and idiosyncrasies of the savage races. What these red men needed was practical human instruction, to show him what duty meant, and that his particular duty was to plant potatoes and cultivate the soil. The best plan would have been to make a better man of him, not merely an indifferent

Christian. I, who have traded with the red men and know their many dialects and have studied their nature and habits through all the tract from Hudson Bay to this point, am convinced that they are both amenable and amendable. Indians they must remain. European customs sit but lightly upon them. But they have the saving grace of honesty, upon which foundation much excellence may be built. The Wood Crees are of very different disposition from the wild Crees of the plain. They are much more peaceable, and spend their time as solitary trappers and hunters on foot.


Big game, too, was scarce, though a few years before buffalo had been shot in the neighbourhood. Moose deer, too, were rare where once they had been abundant. The Indian method of trapping is exceedingly cunning. He builds a small circular fence of wood, about a foot high, at one part of which an opening is left. Across the aperture a thin tree trunk is laid with one end resting on the ground. Inside the circle, a forked stick holds a piece of meat or fish as a bait. That forked stick is set so as to support another small stick upon which rests the half-raised log. No sooner is the baited stick pulled than the supporting one slips, which again lets the

horizontal log fall, to the death of the unwary animal.

In the same way they make all wooden traps, only using larger pieces of wood as larger animals are to be caught. But of all the country's animals there are two that baffle the hunter—the grizzly bear and the moose deer, the former by its strength, the latter by its craftiness. The moose deer is valued by epicures for its nose, ugly to the eye, but delicious to the taste. Its ears are of great length, and are indeed its chief means of protection, for its hearing is so preternaturally acute that the snapping of a twig or the crackle of a dry leaf is enough to warn him of a man's approach,—though the falling of many trees in a storm will not disturb him in the least. I had encountered both these animals, the former when I was helpless and had no choice but to retreat, the latter when I had an advantage over him in finding him asleep. But I resolved to have a fair trial, although I had often heard that no man can hunt a moose but an Indian, whose instinct for the chase has been perfected by years of study and practice.

After a fall of snow we set out, and at sunset camped on a fresh track. Punctually at daylight we decamped, the Indian closely examining

the willows upon which the quarry had been feeding as he went leisurely along. We had our mid-day repast, but my companion had still nothing to say but "gieapitchi waiawen," "far yet," scrutinising the willows and the footprints on the snow with the patience and exactness of an archæologist deciphering an inscription of Pharaoh's tomb. Again we camped, and again we resumed our cold and weary pilgrimage, when the Indian in speaking glances hinted we should leave the trail to leeward. Stealthily the Indian returned towards the trail alone, and returned bending in an attitude of a bob-curtsey to avoid touching twigs. Again this manœuvre was repeated, making as it were the curves of the letter B, the perpendicular line being the moose's trail. The reason for this is that the animal when it wishes to rest circles to the right and back and lies down at the end of this curve, so that the hunter who follows the direct track passes it, and thus warned it bounds away. At last we found ourselves close to our quarry and felt that the critical moment was at hand. A gale of wind was blowing; fortunately, in a favourable direction. But those long, sharp ears! We moved more and more stealthily, examining every bush and thicket. Suddenly my





companion stopped. "See!" he whispered, as he raised his hand and broke a dry twig overhead. A huge dark-haired moose rose in a thicket some forty yards away, and instantly first one bullet and then another pierced him, and he sank back into his former bed.

But these excursions were only occasional. My time through the winter was chiefly passed in setting traps and baits, the latter heavily charged with strychnine. The animals, especially foxes, were very cautious. The wolverine, or carcajou, was on my track and robbed me of nearly all that fate entangled in my traps, just as had been the case on Lake Winnipeg. His tactics are marvellously skilful, and baffle even the Indians over the whole continent. During the whole winter he lives off the labour of the hunter and trapper, and so great is the injury he inflicts that these people call him "Mitche Manitou," or "Evil One." Day and night he searches for the trail of man, and he follows it with untiring perseverance when found. He is rarely caught in the ordinary "dead fall," but is occasionally poisoned or caught in a steel trap. In this case he does not, like other animals, proceed to amputate the limb, but lifting the trap in his mouth he carries or drags it hastily away to a place where

he supposes himself safe, and there devotes himself to the extrication of the imprisoned limb, a task in which he often succeeds. Strange stories are related by the Indians of this animal, which they believe to have a reasoning power almost human. He has certainly the human weakness of curiosity, investigates everything closely, and ferrets objects out of the snow simply to find out what they are. Anything left behind by a trapper offers him an irresistible temptation, and whatever portion of the spoil he cannot eat he utterly destroys by tearing, breaking, or besmearing it. Whatever be the useful purpose served by these animals in the economy of Nature, they have but one redeeming feature in the eyes of an Indian, and that is, that they are not very plentiful.

The winter was long, and yet it seemed to come to an end suddenly, after weeks of from twenty to seventy degrees of frost. The untiring Rock was brought back from his winter pasture, and I found him to my delight "rolling fat," confirming my previous conviction as to the nutritious qualities of the grass, though covered under many feet of frozen snow. On the 13th of April we loaded our carts and turned our backs on Sandy Lake and "Star

Blanket" with mingled feelings of joy and regret. Four days later we crossed the Saskatchewan on very thin and treacherous ice, which was within an ace of plunging Rock and me into our last bath; miraculously and providentially saved by an instinct of my noble horse Rock, who, when he felt the ice move, jumped into the only gap in the high bank, like lightning, and thus saved us both from sudden destruction; and just opposite the spot where I stood naked seven months before to escape being devoured by the would-be grizzlies!

## CHAPTER XII.

### A TRIP TO THE FURTHER WEST.

LAST summer I traversed the wide plains of the South Saskatchewan. This year I resolved to explore the north branch to its source. In the third week in April the earth began to soften; the evergreen firs had the fragrance of last year's leaves, and this year's buds; the rills began to break the frozen silence. The earth was rich with the delicious odours of spring, and after the scentless winter I breathed them with delight. Mackerel clouds floated slowly northward in the sunshine on the wings of a soft south wind. Every lakelet was alive with ducks and geese fluttering eagerly in happy anticipation of early nesting. Every grassy knoll echoed in the early morning with the joyous drumming of the prairie partridge. The Saskatom berry bush was in bud, and already certain spots were blue with anemones. The desolation of the snow-clad winter was gone. Immense flocks of birds passed northwards continually; the sound of

their wings went on all night, well-nigh preventing sleep.

At first I travelled alone through a rich and fertile country, sometimes wooded, sometimes merely a rolling prairie studded with lakelets. When I reached the "Elbow" I found seven sons of "Uncle Sam" there encamped. They were from Montana, and were herding a large number of fine-looking ponies which they had brought to sell to the Indians and half-breeds. They knew that in consequence of recent political developments a good many Canadian dollars would be in the hands of these people this summer, and—well, your American does not lack shrewdness.

They received me hospitably, and had many stories to relate of Sioux, buffaloes, bears, and even of their own ponies. Their conversation was a mine of strange experiences and amusing anecdotes. I had one stroke of luck while in their company. I was driving leisurely along the top of a high ridge in the Eagle Hills when a two-year-old black bear crossed the trail about thirty yards in front. My rifle was at my side—I never moved without it since my former lesson. I took a hurried aim at the animal's nose as he was running towards the river, and to my surprise he

dropped, the bullet taking him on the hind quarters. He roared tremendously, and before I could gather the reins Rock was off full speed in the opposite direction. A shot through the head from my Colt put an end to his sufferings, and, the Americans arriving on the scene, we had the most delicious black steak we ever tasted—for it is only here the pleasure of eating is truly appreciated.

I continued my journey alone as far as Battleford, where the newly-appointed Lieutenant-Governor, the Hon. David Laird, resided. It was but a small cluster of rude wooden buildings, though described as "the capital of the North-West." Here I joined a party of traders—a huge caravan, bound for the farther West. The weather continued beautifully fine, and I was still struck by the fertility of the country, the rich black loamy soil, the picturesque clumps of poplar and birch trees, and the plentifulness of wild fowl about the lakes. Everything seemed to promise the land a great future. Fort Pitt stood, like Fort Carlton, on the flat below the high old bank of the river Saskatchewan, but was smaller in extent and in its buildings. It lay within the country of the Blackfoot Indians, and dealing wholly with this tribe, it furnished

the largest quantity of pemmican and dried meat for the posts more remote from the plains. The little farming done about the place seemed very productive. I saw potatoes of an immense size, and excellent vegetables of all kinds. Wheat, too, would do well if there were any inducement to sow it. Continuing our way, we reached Bear Creek, so called from the number of grizzlies that frequent the thickets on the banks. It is an almost dry gully, with banks so high that it took the caravan two days to get over them. The first day I strolled through many of these thickets, but I disturbed nothing, and nothing disturbed me. On the second day I strolled a little farther afield, and when about two miles from the camp, I observed a wet trail leading from a pond in the bed of the creek. I followed this up to a point on a sandy patch where enormous footprints were plainly marked. Neglecting all precautions in my eagerness, I followed the trace as far as the edge of a closely grown thicket, through which a large opening had been made evidently quite recently. I paused to see to my rifle and to brace up my nerves, and then moved cautiously towards the back of the thicket. Soon I became aware of two glittering eyes, shining like balls of fire

out of the dense undergrowth. There was no mistaking these eyes. It would take a good deal of mesmeric power to dim them. Still they were very little guide to me. A great Indian hunter once told me never to fire at a bear between the eyes, the ball being apt to glance off on either side without, as he phrased it, "doing its duty." But for this hint I should have lost patience and fired. I moved round the skirt of the bush, but it was so thick that I could not see his body, and a tremor of impatience and irritation ran through my whole frame at seeing no means of getting a shot in. As I walked round he began to get restless, too, and turned, watching my movements, and coming towards the opening. I thought I had aimed at his side, and I fired. A report and a roar that echoed through the valley followed almost simultaneously, but my aim had been nervous, and my battle was not yet won. Now was my opportunity to fulfil Napoleon's definition of a truly great man, "one who can command the situation he creates." We were on the second terrace above the bed of the creek. My foe leaped from the thicket quick as lightning, dragging a broken hind leg. Thankful I was to be light of foot, and so to have some advantage



over my huge, shaggy antagonist. A clump of thorns hard by was my salvation. I took up my position and waited. I shall never forget the ferocious expression of that grizzly bear as he approached the side of the bush while I planted a bullet in his broad chest. This brought him to his knees, the huge jaws sputtering blood and foam. But even yet he was not conquered. In an instant he was upon his hind legs, with his mouth wide open, ready to challenge a last grip. Fortunately I was above him, and seeing it to be his last effort, I drove the barrel of my rifle down his throat, and drawing my knife, plunged it to the hilt behind the fore shoulder. Then at last I felt that I had conquered. Yet his death was terrible. He rolled on his back, his enormous paws in the air, and tore himself with his claws in a last delirium of agony. Suddenly there was a shriek, a shiver, a quiver, and the monster lay motionless and dead. "Mihi frigidus horror membra qualit."

Many thrilling stories have been related of the giant grizzly of the Rockies, some of them highly coloured, nay, savouring of the miraculous, as hunters' tales are apt to be. But those who have themselves hunted can easily distinguish between truth and fiction. Be that

as it may, there is no question as to the strength and ferocity of this giant, for even among the Indians there are few indeed who will follow him alone to his lair. Were his activity equal to his strength, he would be the most dangerous animal on the face of the earth. The "king of beasts" himself would be no more before the grizzly than a rabbit. The fact is that the grizzly, like Napoleon, has not merely prestige worth a hundred thousand men, but a reserve of vitality and strength beyond any other animal, and his fighting is not of the blustering description, but rather of the persistent, tense sort, which too often wears out the endurance of the hunter.

As I stood surveying my fallen adversary I heard a low noise behind me. Turning quickly, I found an Indian brave almost at my side. Putting his hand to his mouth, he exclaimed, "Ohoo, Ohoo, Jowa, kēea-winn eesaa gaytchi mwea-koow, O atim moos" ("My friend, you have killed the big bear, the dog"). Thereupon he approached dead Bruin and discharged the contents of his gun into the animal's head. After this exploit he approached me, and we cordially shook hands. When he learned that I could speak his language he was in an ecstasy.

"What was your reason for firing at the dead animal?" I asked.

"Because he killed both my father and my grandfather, and they have never been revenged," was his reply.

Presently two half-clad, miserable-looking women appeared, each carrying a baby and sundry other articles on her back, and one wild, starved-looking boy, carrying an old gun. What share of the household goods was not on the backs of the women was carried, or rather dragged, by three skeleton dogs, harnessed to the triangle of wooden poles sometimes used by Indians instead of a cart. The apex of the triangle rests upon the back of the dog; the base drags along the ground, the baggage being tied to a series of crossbars. The contrivance is called *travoises* or *travaillies*. The condition of an Indian dog is always the best test of his food supply. Fat dogs speak of plenty, thin dogs of scarcity, no dogs of absolute starvation. Only in the last extremity are the dogs killed and eaten. The women, draped in a network of tattered buffalo robes and other rags, squatted upon the grass, scrutinising the bear and myself alternately and laughing heartily at the prospect of an early feast, as well as at the phenomenon of a

white man who understood their own speech. After cutting out a number of the long claws, I left the starved family to enjoy a glorious repast, worth the world to them just then, while I myself returned to camp.

I found Rock tied to the wheel of the buggy, the caravan having moved on many hours before. The "untiring" had many hours' hard trotting to do before we overtook the others.

We passed the Beaver Hills, where it is still possible to see the traces of a beaver dam. The beaver race has for many years been gradually retreating northwards, like a defeated army. This retreat was planned and conducted in most orderly fashion, as I saw on comparing my observations with those of my last year's travel in the South. There was a time when the beaver's soft dark skin was of greater value than it has been recently. The silkworm has stolen his market to a great extent. But his skill as an architect and his diligence as a worker, regarding which I have already spoken in an earlier chapter, deserve to be remembered. His cunning surpasses that of the fox, while the spider cannot be compared with him in patience and endurance. The honeycomb of the bee is less wonderful than his log-and-

mud house under water. In hard labour he has no rival, for he can by his toil turn aside the course of great streams and alter the whole face of the country. He can cut down forest trees and build bridges to admiration, and has his house divided into rooms, with a common hall and a neat doorway, through which he issues for his morning bath with a regularity that would put his Indian fellow-countrymen to shame.

In felling a tree, he can work so as to make it fall in any required direction, and when he has lopped off its branches he can carry it on his back to wherever he wants it to go. They work in divisions, each having a master beaver in control, and any idler or shirker is ignominiously expelled from the ranks. In conducting their long retreat northwards, they have shown an extraordinary faculty for choosing the best and safest localities in little-known streams and silent waters far from the ordinary beat of the trader or traveller. Thus they have been able to keep the invader at bay longer than many a trained army. Still the enemy finds them out, and at the time of which I write (1877) from sixty to seventy thousand beaver skins were despatched to 1, Lime Street, London, every year. Man is their chief

enemy, and their dread of him is great. Their chief means of defence is their extraordinarily acute sense of smell. I have studied beavers from Hudson's Bay to the recesses of the Rocky Mountains, and have observed this peculiarity in all parts. —

One evening I lay in hiding close to a beaver village, enclosing an area of some four acres of deep, clear water. The animals had dammed up the river, so as to form an artificial pond. Nothing was stirring in the deep solitude of the river bank, shut in by rocky walls rising perpendicularly to the very heavens, as it seemed, on looking upwards. The twilight was just beginning to gather over the lonely scene, when I saw a seal-like object raise itself out of the water at the farther end of the pond, glance round for a single second, and disappear. Again it appeared, and again, each time a little nearer, and each time showing a smaller portion of its body as it snuffed the air and looked sharply round in its reconnaissance. This went on until it was within thirty yards of me, when only the tip of its nose appeared, vanishing again instantly with a peculiar splash. It appeared no more. I was discovered, and that splash was a note of warning, reporting the presence of the

enemy, and sending the whole army back to their burrows beneath the bank. No animal is so hard to approach, unless it be the mountain sheep, whose fleetness of foot and power of taking the most impossible-looking leaps are simply miraculous. But these are much hunted, especially the big-horn, or *mouton gris*, and also the *mouton blanc*, as their flesh is delicious.

I shall never forget the neighbourhood of the Rockies, the stillness, the endless loneliness. The occasional sound of a shot died away in vast canons, leaving the sense of silence only the more intense. From a distance of two hundred miles the great rampart can be seen rising from the prairies like a wall. There is nothing in the world to compare with it. And among the mountains themselves the sight of the billowy sea of peaks, tossed in great masses north and south and east and west, above and behind each other, is truly awe-inspiring. It is futile to attempt to describe such a scene. It cannot be painted; it cannot be communicated; nay, it cannot even be shared. The scene of mountains is one of those enjoyments which can only be properly tasted when alone. Shut in these awesome solitudes, with snow and ice,

canon and chasm, grey peaks and infinite blue for prospect, with roar of torrent and thunder of avalanche for music, with the unseen Companion for all-sufficient society, the soul truly becomes in a quite astonishing manner audible to itself. The whole of nature seems to expand under the influence of the majestic surroundings.

Yet these sharp fantastic spires, these barren, snow-clad peaks, where no grass grows, where no herd feeds, and which stand apart dreaming eternal dreams, apparently aloof from all sentient life and every human interest, are not so useless as they seem. The "practical man" must recognise their value. For it is their very height and solitude that makes them the source and means of the practical industries of a continent. It is they that largely control the weather; it is they that furnish the water supply. Up in these altitudes they drink in the moisture of the elements to give it forth again in streams to fertilise the thirsty land below. Nature's problem was how to store against the heat and drought of summer water sufficient for all the land. So she lifted these masses up through the clouds, and among them stored her rains as solid ice, ready to melt and fill the channels of the river fuller



and fuller as the days were hotter. Thus from a height which gives them an incalculable force and driving power great streams flow over the whole land. The Yellowstone, the fateful Rosebud, the Missouri, the Mississippi, to the Gulf of Mexico and the St. Lawrence; the Bow, the Red Deer, and the two Saskatchewan to Hudson's Bay; the Athabasca and Mackenzie to the Arctic Ocean; and the Yukon, the Fraser, the Columbia, the Thompson, the Snake, and the Humboldt to the Pacific,—what a simple yet superb piece of engineering they represent! It is impossible to contemplate these huge, everlasting grey and white masses, with their glacier systems and their snows, without marvelling at the provision of Nature for the flat world below.

They are rich, too, in their store of precious metals and jewels. Throughout the whole of the mountainous region, really a continuation of the Californian and Montana ranges of the United States, the presence of valuable minerals has been demonstrated at so many points as to lead to the opinion that rich metalliferous beds run through the range from end to end, an area of some fifteen thousand square miles.

The prairie tableland rises from an elevation

at Winnipeg of seven hundred feet above sea level to four thousand feet in the pastoral uplands at the base of the Rockies. During the spring I saw wild strawberries and raspberries, and English and other European wild flowers and flowering shrubs in profusion. Cinerarias were abundant of every shade of blue, an immense variety of composite species, many roses, tiger-lilies, orchids, and vetch, and a flower like the lychnis, with sepals of brilliant scarlet.

During the whole spring and summer not a buffalo was to be seen, which shows how closely the few herds that remain are hunted. Once the prairie contained tens of millions of those animals; now, looking eastwards over the great empty ocean of grass, I am speechless at the thought of what this means to the red man. The skin gave him a house, the robe a blanket and bed, the undressed hide a boat, the curved horn a powder flask, the flesh his daily food, the sinew a bow-string and thread to sew his shoes and clothes, the leather a saddle, bridle, rein, and bit, and a lariat for his horse. They supplied his every want from infancy to old age, and after life was over it was in a buffalo robe that he was wrapped to dream of the happy hunting fields. It is

scarcely to be wondered at that my sympathies go out very fully to the Indians, considering how much I saw of them and their ways.

In Baffin Land in 1859 I came in contact with the Eskimos, 2,000 miles from the point I had now reached. On the western shores of Hudson's Bay I found the Swampie Indians, and on the first steppe I made the acquaintance of the Salteaux of Lake Winnipeg and the lower Red River of the north. East of Lake Winnipeg I found the Cranes and Ojibways; west, on the Assiniboine and Qu'Appelle, the once powerful tribe of the Assiniboines. Between this river and the Saskatchewan I travelled among the Plain Crees, whose language is the root speech of all the tribal dialects, as Latin is of the Romance languages of Europe. The country between the two branches of the Saskatchewan, where I spent many adventurous days, is claimed by the warlike Blackfeet, the finest specimens of humanity among them. North of this were the Wood Crees, the Chippewayans, and the "Slavs"; south, towards the Missouri, lived the fierce Sioux. In the neighbourhood of the Rockies were many smaller tribes differentiated only in name: Shushwapps, Sarciers, Stonies, and Sicanies. Having mixed with and talked with all in their various dialects, I learned to

know their characteristics, their distinctive habits and ways of life, and to honour them for much which we, who assume lordship over them, might do well to imitate. Who can tell the origin of these tribes, or set a time when first they hunted the buffalo upon these plains? Many attempts have been made, all to end in vague theories, little better than admissions of failure. The 30,000 feet in depth of Argoic rock reveals the New World to be older than the Old. Long before Abram departed out of Haran these tribes may have been wandering over the limitless prairie. Good Father André believed, and contended vigorously, that they were the lost tribes of Israel. Ethnologists find in them the lineaments of Norse, Celtic, Tartar, and Egyptian ancestry. And after all nothing is known either of whence or when or how they came, or of their past history in the land. Only their future is certain and somewhat sorrowful, for the fiat has gone forth, and they must sicken and die before the breath of civilisation. What then? What is there to say? Nothing at all. They and we alike are creatures of a day. Races and individuals arise, and run their course, and disappear. We are the children of Nature, and of God.

So then I had realised my boyish hopes.

I had seen the great New World, and spoken with Indians, and shot grizzlies in the Rocky Mountains. And now I had reached the limit of my journeying. The rest was to be but coming back. I was, and am, satisfied, amply satisfied. I wandered a last time among the great scaurs and tumbled cliffs, then turned away eastward with the memory of it in my heart, to think of it and dream of it *ad finem*. What a dreamland, to be sure, for Celtic imagination!

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE RETURN JOURNEY.

My way home lay before me as I slowly descended the eastern ridge of the mountains among which I had been roaming. Down there so far beneath my feet the pine trees on the plain looked like spear-grass. I distinctly saw the gradual fall of the prairie as it sank from the plateau near the mountains to lower levels beyond in visibly graduated steps, as if marking the retreat of the primeval waters. The horizon was wide and blue as on the sea, and the same keen, fresh air swept over this undulating prairie ocean. Soon I left the rocky summits behind, and saw about me patches of bleached grass, with green spots, where water had gathered in the hollows. Lower I passed through tufts of birch and copses of the balsam poplar, emerging at last upon the prairie, rich in its summer bloom. Nowhere on earth is there richer profusion of blossom. In July the roses are in full beauty, and for hundreds of miles my trail lay through masses of them, of all shades, from

palest cream to richest crimson. Every cutting and bank and scoop was filled with them. They spread a pink bloom over the land for acres. Wild lavender, red columbine, spireas, white and pink, blossomed with them; pale yellow cactus, and the gaillardi of Scotch flower-gardens grew like buttercups in the grass, and a few weeks later the lilies, rich in scarlet, added the last perfection to the year's bloom.

Such was the Nature's garden through which I drove for hundreds of miles, till I found myself at the Roman Catholic Mission of St. Alban's, the headquarters of that excellent son of his church, Bishop Grandin, whose diocese is larger than Europe. During my short stay at Fort Pitt I heard him preach to his people, fluently, in four different tongues. The little colony of some thirty houses, built on rising ground, near a small lake and river, seemed in a flourishing condition. A fine wooden bridge spanned the river, the only structure of the kind I had seen in the country.

The Bishop's house was a pretty white building, with a large garden attached, and adjoining it were the chapel, school, and nunnery. His lordship was absent when I called, but I found a worthy substitute in the resident priest. The Bishop's furniture was simple in

the extreme, consisting chiefly of a few rough chairs. The walls were adorned with many coloured prints, amongst which were portraits of Pius IX., and of Bishop Taché of St. Boniface, with a picture representing some very substantial and pious-looking angels lifting a few merry-visaged saints out of the flames of purgatory. The school was crowded to excess, and all the work seemed successful. I must say that at this mission settlement I found the most charitable, the most admirable, and the most truly Christian work in the country. The devotion of the Roman Catholic priesthood is well known, but here there had been but lately a notable example of it. A few years before, a severe epidemic of smallpox had visited the plain country. When the attack comes on, with the burning fever, the red man finds his relief in great draughts of cold water, with the result that he soon finds permanent rest in the arms of his best friend, death. Thus the epidemic had killed the natives off by scores, when the Bishop and his staff set to work among the widely-scattered camps on the plains, and rescued from the jaws of death some eighty castaway children belonging to plague-stricken families. All these were fed, clothed, and educated in this isolated mission,



the motto over whose lintel might well be, "Now abideth faith, hope, and charity, but the greatest of these is charity." It would, however, have been too much to expect that these wild children of the prairies should at once prove themselves amenable to instruction in Christian dogma. Some of their answers to the catechist were more entertaining than accurate. But there were signs of an admirable beginning, and at least the Bishop had not been content to commend these orphans to the Fatherhood of God and pass on. Whatever be the reason, there is no doubt that the Romish clergy far excel their Protestant brethren in their missionary work and influence. One of them said to me, in the course of a friendly discussion, "You see we have no other claims on our lives. The Protestants have to think what comforts they can give their wives, and how much money they will be able to leave to their children." Be this as it may, they certainly allow no considerations of personal danger or hardship to deter them in their work, and they have been singularly successful in teaching the people the elements of civilisation as well as religion.

Fort Edmonton stands on the north bank of the Saskatchewan. It is the chief factor's

headquarters and the most important establishment in the district. Its form is much like that of the other forts, a group of wooden buildings, surrounded by a high square palisade, flanked at each corner with small towers. I found that here as at the Red River many retired Company's servants were betaking themselves to farming and building log huts along the river bank north and west of the fort. The fields of wheat were magnificent, waving in the autumn breeze and shining in the sun like gold. A single glance at the fields was sufficient to show the suitability of the soil for cereal-growing. It is of the same "fat" sort as that at the Red River, and of equal depth, the only soil I have as yet seen to equal it.

News reached me here that eight or ten thousand Sioux Indians had crossed the boundary into British territory seeking safety from the American troops. Still I resolved to make the thousand miles' journey to Winnipeg alone. Rock was in good condition, I myself in high spirits and fears for personal safety long since forgotten.

My first stage was Fort Saskatchewan, recently established as the headquarters of the Mounted Police on the plains of the North.

West. Lieutenant-Colonel Jarvis hospitably entertained me here for a few days. I have a grateful recollection, too, of Sergeant-Major Belcher, a big, burly Englishman of fine physical proportions and apparently fitted for any emergency, as well as of Sergeant Carr, a very jolly and good-looking Irishman who certainly ought to have been a knight of chivalry and of romance. He acted as Postmaster-General, not for the fort only but for an area quite as large as that controlled from St. Martin's le Grand. The police force numbered one thousand men of splendid physique, and was both military and civil. Indeed it was a kind of combination of mounted infantry, artillery, transport, commissariat, and ambulance, every man of which, whether in camp, barracks, or on the trail, had to be prepared to cook, fight, carry despatches, drive a team, or break in a wild colt. They were armed with Winchester carbines and revolvers. It patrolled a country larger than Great Britain and Ireland, which has since increased by the addition of territories further west. It is impossible for me here to recount all its notable achievements in dealing with "Sitting Bull's" braves since last year's massacre of Custer's force in Wyoming. It was organized just after these great plains had

been handed over by treaty to the Canadian Government, and when there was some reason to fear lest the country should lapse into anarchy.

Up till that time my Company had for two centuries kept more than merely a semblance of order among the inhabitants, and indeed some tribute is justly due to its policy towards these savages. It certainly was singularly successful in securing their confidence and goodwill. By the simple aid of the initials "H. B." a traveller could cross the plains from Fort Garry to the Pacific in perfect safety, even in times of Indian warfare. We had a doggerel verse which ran—

" But when they see that little flag  
A-stickin' in that cart,  
They just said ' Hudson Bay, go on,  
Good trader with good heart.' "

But when the plains were thrown open for settlers it was thought that strange men, with strange implements and novel machinery, might excite the fears and perhaps the dislike of the fierce Cree and Blackfoot tribes, already partially demoralised by the "fire water" which Americans were sending into the country. And thus the Mounted Police were raised.

Leaving Fort Saskatchewan I had continued my lonely journey for some days, when, one evening, just as I had finished supper, a procession of two Indian families walked up to my camp fire. The men, as usual, stalked on before, carrying their guns only, while the women followed behind heavily loaded with the household gods. These consisted of battered kettles, papooses, and whatever personal property either of the two possessed. Wretched-looking children in rags and crying for food straggled in the rear one by one, all starved and naked, with the bones showing painfully under the tender brown skin. One poor tattered mother carried a two-year-old son on her back along with other burdens, while a newborn infant, swaddled in a ragged shawl bagged and tied like a black pudding, surmounted the load. Poor creature, she sank to the ground exhausted, and immediately another woman squatted beside her and laid her head on her knees, whereupon she instantly set about examining her friend's pate like a monkey at the Zoo. Never in all my experience had I come across a more tattered and demoralized lot. Anything more utterly miserable than their condition it would be impossible to imagine. Their story was a heartrending one. Sickness

had overtaken them on their way to the plains. Their two ponies were killed and eaten, then their dogs, and their loads left behind on the trail. Even the tattered buffalo robes had been roasted and eaten, and the scraps of torn blankets, and the odds and ends of battered kettles and rusty traps, were all they had left. They had known the chiefs "Big Bear," "Little Bear," and "Lucky Man," but they had held aloof from these, and of their own company all that death had left were the tattered few now gathered starving in my camp. Poor things, it was not their fault that their race was doomed to extinction; it was not our fault that we found better uses for their native soil than leaving it as a haunt for buffaloes, but it seemed hard that they should thus be left naked and starving. Cheerfully I handed them all the food I had, little enough, unfortunately. Indeed they were so fierce with hunger that I felt some dread lest Rock and I should furnish their larder for the next week, for the slender meal I could offer them scarcely did more than intensify their hunger. Yet it turned out to be sufficient to put them to sleep, and soon the camp was silent. The silence of these prairie nights is profound. As I lay awake I heard the occasional hoot of an owl or cry of a

wolf, and the breathing of the sleeping people beside me, but besides these not a sound of life from horizon to horizon. A hush seemed to lie upon the whole wide world. By-and-by the Aurora borealis began to play faintly across the sky. It grew brighter as I watched it, and soon its rose-tinted waves and bars of exquisite light flashed and palpitated over the whole heavens. Up and down, out and in, the tremulous shadows wove their mazy network in threads of subtle radiance. It was like a dance of celestial spirits, and I scarcely wondered at the theory held by some that, were our ears less dull, we should hear seraphic sounds—perhaps a faint music of the spheres—accompanying this shadowy minuet of the skies.

Morning came, and I drank the last potful of sugarless tea I was to taste for many days to come. I gave the Indians all my gunpowder and shot—for I carried a double-barrelled shot gun as well as my Winchester. This rather reckless gift nearly cost me my life. No traveller should cross the prairies without a good shot gun and plenty of loose ammunition. Big game is not within reach every day, nor even every week, and to trust only to one's rifle for food is therefore rather risky. They

had not a mouthful of food when we parted, but there was at least the hope that the powder and shot would enable them to procure some.

For my part I travelled many days without a shot, and to my greater distress discovered at last that I was on the wrong trail. But by this time physical discomfort affected me but little. I had often known what it was to live chiefly on imagination. So I maintained a stout heart, and doggedly pursued my way, depending for food on the roots of species of wild turnip and potato.

One evening I reached the shores of an unknown lakelet just as the woods were darkening into a cold intensity of green. The smooth waters were flushed into warmth by the reflection of the sunset clouds, which spread in soft pink masses over the whole heavens. The beauty of the scene fascinated me, and I resolved to camp there for the night. Gradually the colour faded, and the grey chill of twilight crept through the air. The birds were hushed, and the loneliness and silence weighed heavily upon my spirits. Occasionally the hoot of an owl or the cry of a hungry wolf broke out of the gathering darkness. A solitary loon resting on the surface of the lake uttered its melancholy wail. Famished and cold I lay



by my lonely fire, turning now one side, now the other, to its warmth, imitating with my wearied body the diurnal motion of the earth round the sun. Suddenly I heard a sound as of dogs barking. I sat up and listened eagerly. Yes, it was distinct and clear through the silence of the cloudless, starry night. Dogs! That meant Indians, a camp, food, companionship, direction. In a trice Rock was harnessed, and we were off through the darkness. Straight for the sound of barking he hastened, and soon I found myself, with hardly any guidance of my own, right in the midst of an immense Indian camp. Out from every tent poured braves, with full-cocked guns and much excited talk, to find out the meaning of the intrusion. A few warning shots were fired, and all crowded round my buggy. There was something indescribably terrifying in the haste, the alarm, the excitement, and the babel of unknown speech. Seven Indian dialects I knew well, but this was merely a confusion of meaningless chatter and fierce yells. When I had time to look about me I found that I had blundered into a camp of Blackfeet, a tribe of whose language and habits I knew nothing. Fortunately it transpired that one or two of them could speak a little Cree, and by this means we soon became

friends. The chief himself, "Old Sun," a humane and wise man, conducted me to his tent, and treated me with the greatest hospitality. I even got so far as to suffer the rite of initiation into the "blood brotherhood." Altogether I was in high favour, more so than I quite wished to be, though after my painful journey, and my weary days of cold and hunger, I was ready to plunge vigorously enough into what seemed a life of ease and luxury. There is always a great danger of reaction when those who have been famished to the verge of starvation find themselves suddenly in the midst of plenty. I simply sloughed my old vigorous self, and relapsed into a kind of torpor, interrupted with ravenous fits of overeating. The wonder is that my sorely-abused "frater corpus," as St. Francis called his body, came out of it as it did. But it was merely a reaction, and soon the ordinary course of my nature reasserted itself, and I thought with appreciation of the wild turnip and potato soup I had lived upon so slenderly in the wilderness.

This tribe, called in their own language Savakeans, I found to be the most original and interesting, and at the same time the most dignified and most rationally inclined, that I had yet come across. The men appeared of

less stature than their enemies and neighbours the Crees, but were nevertheless tall, well-made, active and athletic in appearance. Their manners were mild and pleasing, an effect greatly heightened by a singular softness and melody of voice. They had clear-cut, noble features, the nose aquiline, straight or slightly Roman, and the cheekbones less prominent and lips thinner than those of any other tribe I had met with. Their dress was characteristically Indian, but unusually clean and well ordered. Both sexes were highly painted with vermilion on lips, cheeks and forehead. The women wore long gowns of buffalo skin, dressed to a beautiful softness, and dyed with yellow ochre. These robes were confined at the waist by broad belts of dressed skin, thickly studded over with highly polished, round brass buttons. The tribal instinct is strong among all these savages, and tribal jealousies and tribal wars are perpetually going on. One result of this is that intermarriage of blood relations are common, and that some of the smaller tribes have suffered from this habit to such a degree that they have become extinct. Among these Blackfeet, however, I found this evil obviated by a rude rule, by which the children of two brothers or of two sisters might

not marry, while a man's children might marry into the family of his sister. The tribe as a whole were vigorous in mind, apt to learn, quick in understanding, and sound in judgment. They had a notion of a supernatural world, of a life after death, and of the difference between right and wrong. Old traditions of visions of the unseen lingered among them, of dead relatives seen in dreams, and of assurances of beatific vision in another life. Their dead were hung in trees, with all the articles familiarly used in life. A horse was shot for their equipment in the Happy Hunting Grounds. All brass ornaments were removed, and that some portion or sign of human love might accompany them, the widow or widower chopped off a finger-joint. Many might be seen who had thus lost three or four finger-joints.

The chief "Old Sun" was a remarkably "knowing" old gentleman, and might almost have been a Pict, so "auld farrant" was he. All his life he had been *par excellence* a warrior, a councillor, and a hunter, volunteering again and again for dangerous duties and positions. His wife had a strange and romantic story, quite worth relating in full.

Many years before this Piegan maiden had

wandered alone from her camp to look for strayed horses. These horses had, however, been stolen by the men of Gros Ventres, a small tribe, the last remnant of which were the miserable creatures to whom I had given my ammunition earlier on my journey. Not content with securing the horses, they surrounded the maiden and carried her off. Her hands were tied behind her, and she was placed before the chief on horseback, and rode on till the middle of the following day, when he ordered a halt, and sent all his men off to hunt, he himself staying to watch the captive maiden. He became weary, however, having spent many nights without sleep, and lay down to rest. But first he tied her securely with a strong raw thong, which he attached to his own person, and placed his gun and knife under him. His tomahawk, however, he left lying by his side. As soon as he was asleep the girl quietly took the tomahawk and struck him with all her might upon the temple, killing him on the spot. As in the last spasm he turned, she caught up the knife upon which he had been lying, cut the thongs which bound her limbs, and finally drove its long blade into the dead chief's heart. After cutting scalp, tongue, and one arm from the body, and

appropriating the dead man's gun, knife, and tomahawk, she mounted his horse and rode off. She soon found herself being followed hard by her captor's "braves," who at one point were within five hundred yards of her. Yet her horse, fired by the smell of human blood, galloped with frenzied speed, and so saved her life, for she reached her camp in safety the next day. She treasured the ghastly relics with infinite pride, keeping them as trophies of war in a leather cabinet made of a grizzly bear skin with claws on. In consequence of this act, atrocious to our ideas, and yet full of a kind of savage heroism recalling that of Jael, the wife of Heber, she was made the wife of "Old Sun," one of the most outstanding of the Red Men's chiefs.

After my idle existence had fairly had time to pall upon me, I fell eagerly to planning how best to resume my journey, and when, with a fresh supply of gunpowder and shot in my possession, I said good-bye to my kind friends and shook up Rock's reins once more, I felt like a schoolboy just let out of school. Although thick smoke eddied from a hole at the top of the tent, it was most painful to my eyes, and I had been truly slowly "cured" in smoke. I rejoiced to be again out

in the open alone. There is not much variety in the prairie, but in its wide solitary freedom I found my deepest instincts satisfied. There is no more misleading saying of antiquity than that which says, "A little while is enough to view the world in; it signifies not a farthing whether a man stands gazing here a hundred or a hundred thousand years, for all he gets by it is to see the same sights so much the oftener." This may be true of the man who never grows and never learns. The genuine observer finds no sameness. If it is possible to pore over some great poet again and again, and to find new meaning and beauty every time; how much more is it possible in studying that supreme poem, the Universe? How I searched it! How it searched me! I said to myself, "It is good to be here," and I would fain have built my tabernacle there in the great solitude.

But I had to press on, and day after day passed in steady, uneventful progress till the Eagle Hills—near which I had killed the black bear five months before—were passed. One evening, observing the moon to be in its first quarter, I resolved to travel on until it disappeared from sight. But as I looked upwards I saw a black spot gathering on the

face of a crystal sky, high in the zenith. Just so had I noticed the first indication of a prairie thunderstorm, and now I judged it best to look for a suitable camping ground before the torrents descended. The blackness rapidly spread itself over the vault of heaven, and out of it came first a few flashes of sheet lightning, and afterwards—not torrents of rain, but a living mass of voracious flies, blacker and somewhat larger than mosquitoes, and armed with long fangs. Had not Rock been already in harness when the fly-cloud burst, he would surely have been devoured. He and I alike were well nigh choked; mouth and nostrils were filled in an instant if we opened either. And as we were thirty miles from the open prairie, my only hope of safety lay in driving Rock at his best—which was about ten miles an hour—in order to draw air suction; for the night was as calm as death. In three hours he brought me into the open country, how, I scarcely know, as I was under layers and layers of flies, while he, poor animal, was covered all over some six inches deep, as I found on rubbing him with grass. A blessed breeze had sprung up from the east, and, driving to a high hillock, I quickly set fire to the grass. Rock stood in the flames



doggedly, apparently resolved to be burned to death rather than have the life sucked out of him by the torturing insects. To me it was the most unique experience I had met. I had heard from Indians of such things, but had never seen anything of the kind before.

The severe bleeding so weakened my brave horse that it became necessary to get a companion for him, partly to inspirit him, and partly to ease his burden. And, indeed, the Blackie I eventually procured proved a wonderful encouragement, and soon Rock became his old self again.

Crossing the South Saskatchewan at Batoche's scow ferry, I found myself on the old trail over which I had passed two years before—then westward bound to a *terra incognita*, now eastward set for home. Once again at the foot of the well-known hill, the solitary landmark of this lonely wilderness, Spathanaw Watchi, on the top of which stands the cross over the solitary grave, I lingered, pondering over all that had befallen me since last I rested there. Something in the wide, unpeopled solitude recalled the words of Rabelais, "Go, friends, in the protection of that intellectual sphere of which the centre is everywhere and the circumference nowhere,

which we call God. Everywhere, in the world, in the motion of the planets, in the wondrous mechanism of the body, we find the works of the Divine Hand, the design of the Divine Hand, but to all prayers, to all cries, all yearnings, there is silence." Nay, that God had not been silent to me, that God had been near to me in my lonely wanderings during these two years, I am a witness. Thus, I beg to differ from the French satirist and priest. Full of humour and wit as he was, he was deficient in that delicacy without which genius may sparkle for a moment, but can never shine with pure undiminished lustre. Yet Nature is physical, and pitiless in her reign of unrelenting law, neither nurse nor mother, but a field for labour and a grave. And not until these primitive conditions have been modified and some modest degree of culture attained, can a higher conception of the world and its spiritual meaning be obtained by man.

After leaving the great salt plain behind, and as I entered the West Touchwood Hills, my attention was suddenly arrested by some strange object on the road before me. Behind me lay a gloomy sky, which lent but little clearness to the vision, but presently the darkness gave way to a cheerful blue, out of which

the brilliant autumn sunshine burst forth. Then I saw that the strange object was a caravan coming to meet me. Who could it be invading the wilderness in such a fashion? A thousand conjectures ran through my mind as a horseman rode forward to meet me. It turned out to be Mrs. Laird, wife of the Lieutenant-Governor, escorted by a great retinue *en route* to join her husband at Battleford. As I was the latest arrival from there I must be prepared to be fully catechised. We had never met before, but when people encounter each other in the middle of the prairies they do not wait for introductions. She shook hands with me, and after a few preliminaries I took my position in front of a glowing camp fire, she all eagerness to question, I equally ready to answer, and the business of the evening began.

“You have come from Battleford, Mr. Campbell. How is my husband? Do you think I shall ever see him again? As you know, numbers of these wild American Sioux have crossed the boundary. What shall we do? Oh, my dear husband, were I only near him! Are the Indians wild at Battleford? Did any of them fire at you during your long travels amongst them? Where is your party? How

daring of you to travel as you do without a companion ! ”

“ Timor facet Deos,” I put in.

“ True, Mr. Campbell, but not in our time, when the Sioux Indians are acting so cruelly.”

Upon being informed that I had travelled alone from the Upper Saskatchewan, she almost fainted away with amazement. By-and-by she resumed, “ You are foolhardy, Mr. Campbell, and may yet rue the day you risked so much. There are many Sioux Indian camps lying south of your trail, so beware. We have to keep watch every night, and even through the day we are scarcely safe. Did you hear how these same heartless savages cut down General Custer and his soldiers to a man ? The General’s wife was not with him—which was a mercy in one way—but I am going to join my husband to suffer with him, should the Fates serve him in such a way.”

Truly, I thought, what a priceless treasure is a true woman, that one can trust alike far away and at home !

It was quite evident, however, that I must consider my own safety ; and as a man’s first duty is to himself, and I was never good at angling for favour, I drove away, and was

soon lost to view among the hills. I thought with some amusement of my recent position under the fire of Mrs. Laird's kindly cross-questioning. Still, as I drove on, I kept a sharp lookout, feeling that any clump of trees might hold a lurking foe, whose rifle might empty my saddle at any moment. My noble Rock was still alive, doing his two yokes to Blackie's one without a murmur. And the score was steadily running in his favour, for already Blackie was beginning to show signs of wearing out. Very few horses could have borne the strain of repeated double yokes at the rate I had travelled from the South Saskatchewan—sixty-five miles a day. Apparently Rock felt that he was being imposed upon, for as I awoke one morning I espied him hobbling himself and his companion into a dense thicket, evidently ~~hiding to evade~~ an early yoke. I watched the manœuvre with interest while drinking the inevitable black, strong, sugarless tea, and picking what flesh remained on the bones of a prairie chicken, which constituted the early morning's repast. Had I not seen them enter I could not possibly have discovered them, as they packed themselves side by side as closely as herrings in a barrel to avoid being discovered.

It was evening when I emerged from the long range of Touchwood Hills, which in days gone by supplied shelter and hiding places for Crees and Assiniboines in time of war. Under this cover they manœuvred their forces in preparation for their stealthy, early morning attacks. Just as I was about to squat on the greensward to enjoy a meal preparatory to a moonlight drive over the long "pheasant plain," I suddenly espied a solitary Indian approaching, carrying a long gun on his shoulder. He had evidently emerged out of a swamp or thicket hard by. I awaited his approach, and after the usual preliminary savage greeting we shook hands. He was gaudily dressed, but gaunt in appearance, and stood before me straight and dignified as a soldier before his superior officer. He had regular features, a sallow complexion, and an unvarying smile. As he cast a scrutinizing glance at me, my horses, my buggy, my Winchester, and breech-loading shot-gun which lay in it, his face for a moment assumed a hard, defiant expression, which I shall not easily forget. It was only a flash, however, and the next instant there was nothing but the perfect calm and cunning composure of his race. His movements were remarkably

quick, and betrayed his southern origin. At first he professed not to understand Cree, but after drinking a pot of strong tea, and picking the bones of two large ducks, he changed his mind, and began to converse freely in that language, though with a strange accent. As we squatted on the grass together I found myself distrusting my savage visitor more and more, but I showed nothing, and kept outwardly as cool as a cucumber. I was quite conscious, however, that although a few miles nearer civilisation than I had been recently, I still carried my life in my hand, and the slightest mistake might deprive me of it.

"Where is your camp?" I began.

"I don't know. I lost my way, being in a strange country," was his answer.

"Do you know the chiefs Red Cloud and Sitting Bull?" I queried.

"I have heard of them," was the curt reply.

"Did you know of the battle the latter fought with the Whites last year?"

He shook his head, indicative of ignorance and innocence alike. But upon my pressing him he admitted, under my promise not to betray him or single him out for punishment in any way, that he had taken a prominent part in the battle of Rosebud Valley. Still

he pointed out diplomatically, that if it was aggressive in form it was defensive in essence, being in defence of their wives and children. The reader will recall the account already given of that atrocious event. It only added to my horror at the recollection of it when my savage guest (possibly desiring to unnerve and terrify me) exhibited the fabric of an inner garment composed entirely of the scalps of his slain foes. Little did I guess that he was even then counting on adding mine to his collection.

We parted on the best of terms, shaking hands most amicably, and I drove off, feeling somewhat glad to be rid of him. I was barely twenty yards away—when, whiz! and my wide felt hat fell down before me with a bullet-hole in the brim. Drawing rein quick as lightning, I grasped my Winchester, and turned just in time to see my treacherous foe disappear among the tall reeds in the little hollow out of which I had drawn the water for the tea which we had drunk together. Instinctively, and without a thought, I put my rifle to my shoulder, and planted three consecutive bullets into the spot where he had disappeared, and drove on as if nothing had happened. So much for the ingenuous native who had assured me that he had not so



much as a single charge of ammunition in his possession. I felt the more indignant at his ingratitude that I had always had reason to regard myself as in a somewhat special degree the friend of the Indians. I had taken a very great interest in them, had made a constant practice of treating them kindly, and had secured the regard and affection of many individuals, and I think the confidence of the tribes generally. Perhaps it is most charitable to suppose that this particular savage, being of a southern tribe, did not know me. But the reader will scarcely blame me in the circumstances for putting it out of his power to mend his faulty aim.

I had considerable cause for anxiety as I pursued my way on that memorable night. For one thing, there was the risk of being followed by other braves who had been ambushed close by. For another, I soon became aware that a tremendous prairie fire was raging across the whole face of the Pheasant Plains. It rolled before a gale of wind almost athwart the trail, and lit up the whole heavens with a burning glow. There was no need to ask myself which danger I feared most. Nobody who had ever seen a prairie fire would have any doubt about that.

It rushed across the plain, swifter than a race-horse, rolling now sky high, now low down, seizing on everything that came in its way, high dry reeds, withered long grass, bushes, everything, consuming all with crackling and roaring. A prairie fire always reminded me of the Scriptural scene when Abraham "looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and lo! the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." I hastily set fire to a hillock, and when that had burnt over the top, there I took up my position with my buggy and my two horses. By lying down flat on my face with a wet blanket over my head, I managed miraculously to escape suffocation.

Such are the joys of travelling. I do not imagine they would appeal to everybody, or even to many. The traveller, like the poet, must be born, not made. And even of those who fancy they would like to travel, most will find their best satisfaction in doing so in a good library, with plenty of maps and a comfortable armchair.

At 12.30 A.M. the wind dropped suddenly, and in the dead calm the fire subsided. I spent the night rifle in hand, listening with a beating heart for footsteps. I would have travelled all night, but in the haste and confusion of

securing myself against the fire I had entirely lost the trail, and could not even remember on which side of the hillock it lay. It was a long and anxious night, the most eventful of all my career, and at the first streak of dawn I gladly left the scene of my lonely vigil, not even waiting to brew myself a pot of tea,—that most excellent Souchong imported by my Company, and unequalled outside of the Celestial Empire itself. I drove on in haste, and reached Musk Rat Creek without further incident.

At Portage La Prairie I passed under a triumphal arch, erected by the people in honour of the first visit of Canada's Governor-General, the Earl of Dufferin, to this virgin province of the prairies. His Excellency was in a most humorous mood when I heard him, and I recollect the enjoyment—and the brogue—with which he told a story of the days of his wooing. One evening he employed a carman—a fellow-countryman—to drive him to Captain Hamilton's residence. On the way he chatted with the man, and heard, to his great amusement, that pretty Miss Hamilton, bejabbers, was soon to be married to an "uncommonly ugly man with a glass eye." "Ochone, ochone, it's meself that's sorry," said Patrick. Both Lord

and Lady Dufferin evidently thoroughly enjoyed the reminiscence.

It was at Portage La Prairie that Blackie showed signs of giving out. Taken by himself, he was negatively good, but by the side of the untiring Rock he was positively bad, for a quick and long journey. Indeed, a few miles further on, his abandonment became inevitable. Not so with noble Rock, for his last day he covered sixty miles, having apparently abundant stamina left.

I arrived in Winnipeg early in October, after an unusually circuitous journey lasting two years, one month, and thirteen days, having travelled the last six hundred miles in eight and a half days, and thus broken the record. During all this time I had lived as a primitive nomad. Out of the seven hundred and seventy-six days and nights, three hundred and ninety-three were passed in the open air, with only the heavens for shelter. And of the eighteen years, which I passed in the country, six and three-quarters were passed in this manner. Summer and winter temperatures vary very considerably; from 80° below zero to 120° above it. But owing to the dryness of the air there is comparatively little discomfort experienced, even when the temperature is very low. The cold certainly strikes one much more by its effect

on the thermometer than on the human frame. I do not vaunt any special physical powers of mine in rough endurance. The circumstances merely show how fully man can adapt himself to circumstances, and even vie with the wild animals, provided he accepts the proper conditions. Nor have I suffered any special inconvenience in health—indeed, a healthier man it would be hard to find in any place or any country, thank God !

The stride that Winnipeg had made in my absence was to me simply marvellous. Until a short time ago the country was unknown to geographers, unknown, in fact, to all except a few stray hunters and trappers in the employ of my Company. Now civilization had fairly laid hold upon the east, and was beginning her westward progress. It is said that "trade follows the flag"; and the fact that our aims are neither territorial, nor military, nor political, but economic and commercial, seems difficult for foreign nations to grasp. The truth of Napoleon's phrase, "a nation of shopkeepers," is borne in upon us as we study the expansion of our Empire. Gold digging and sheep farming laid the foundations of our colonies in Australia and South Africa. India is ours through concessions to a trading

company. And last, but not least, our transatlantic dominion had its germ in the fur-trading industry of my own Company. In the Canadian prairies in which I roamed there is room for at least one hundred million souls to live and thrive in peace. From Winnipeg in the east to the foot of the Rocky Mountains is a distance of one thousand miles, and from the forty-ninth parallel of north latitude to the watershed of the North Saskatchewan about three hundred and sixty miles, the area thus included amounting to three hundred and thirty thousand square miles, or two hundred and ten millions acres. The greater part of this enormous area offers no impediment to immediate cultivation, being open prairie and ready for the plough. For countless generations it has been the haunt of buffalo, and the soil is rich in animal and other manure. It is indeed a poor man's country. The Rocky Mountains form a natural wall dividing the rich mining districts of the western sea-board from the central plains, which offer the best source of the country's food supply. West of the mountains the soil is untamable by the plough; east, although there are rich coal deposits, the chief use of the land is in the raising of wheat and other food produce. With capital and labour

uniting to open up its wealth, there is no limit to the productiveness and prosperity to which the North-West may hopefully look forward. During all those years, it is but fair to add, I was tenacious of life as well as of purpose. After deliberate consideration I severed my connection with my honourable Company when I thought I had exhausted its possibilities, *i.e.*, promotions similar to those given by the old Company, no longer in existence.

*Au revoir*, but not adieu, to all my old comrades. After playing for eighteen years my part in this little drama, I considered it my sacred duty throughout the business to display my full share of the wisdom of the serpent. On the great hospitality and gentlemanly bearing they have always displayed towards myself personally, there is no need to descant.

Henceforth, "the condition which high friendship demands is ability to do without it." For truly, I look upon it thus, that the more strength and magnanimity one displays at such a time, the more one desists from uneasy insistence in drawing comrades and friends back to old remembrance—in short, the better able we show ourselves to live without it, the more our friends and comrades will be drawn towards us in after years.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### A VISIT TO SCOTLAND, ENGLAND, FRANCE, AND THE UNITED STATES.

"When silent Time wi' lichtly foot  
Had trod on twenty years,  
I sought again my native land  
Wi' mony hopes and fears;  
Wha kens gin the dear friends I left  
May still continue mine,  
Or gin I e'er again shall taste  
The joys o' auld lang syne?"

AFTER a few days in Winnipeg I stepped on board the steamer *Minnesota*, bound for Fisher's Landing, on the Red Lake River, on 13th October, 1877, the exact day and month on which I had arrived at the Red River eighteen years before. There were many passengers, notably the lovely twin daughters of the Hon. A. Morris, of the *Beardy* interview already described, attended by the Lieutenant-Governor's private secretary.

My good friend J. A. Grahame, Esq., our chief commissioner, was also on board, and last, but not least, our inveterate opponent Dr. Schultz,



now a member of the Federal House of Commons at Ottawa, where he represented an Indian constituency, whose lands have nearly all become the property of Pharaoh's. That bone of contention, the Company's charter, being now out of the way, the doctor was more amiably disposed, feeling no doubt that he had conquered, and we made a merry trio, past disagreements being happily forgotten. Time in its flight had sapped the vigour and vitality of this son of Thor, and there were evident signs of something wrong with the respiratory organs. It was, however, quite evident that his ambition was still alive and unsatisfied.

Above the American boundary the course of the Red River is very tortuous, and our progress through Dakota was slow, so that the boat did not reach her destination until the 16th. On that day I had my first railway ride, which brought me into Duluth, on St. Louis Bay, at the west end of Lake Superior, and the extreme eastern limit of the prairie country. High above the present margin of the lake rises the terrace, five hundred feet high, which has been left dry by the subsidence of the waters, and at the foot runs the narrow margin of beach at the present level. The terrace is broken by a river which flows

into the Bay, and on one side of the river is a flat reach of low, swampy ground; on the other the ground rises sharply into a bluff. On this high land the houses of Duluth are perched, like goats grazing on a steep hillside—an arrangement one sees at Quebec, at Bar Harbour, and at some small places in the English counties of Cornwall and Devon, but scarcely anywhere else. From here the steamer *Manitoba* conveyed us to Fort William, once the headquarters of our bitter opponents the North-West Company, who had made it a really formidable fortress, with regular works and a heavy armament, so as to terrorise their savage allies and dependants. At Michipicoten Fort we took on board a Mr. Bell, who, with a surveying party, had been examining the natural resources of James Bay. A run through the splendid American locks of Sault St. Marie, and we entered Lake Huron, journeying then to Port Huron, River St. Clair, Toronto, and Ottawa.

On the day upon which I left Winnipeg, Mr. Bannatyne, a member of Parliament of the Federal House at Ottawa, kindly asked if he could do anything to help me on “entering the realms of civilisation.” I thanked him, but could think of nothing. He insisted, however,

on giving me a letter of introduction\* to the Premier, the Hon. A. McKenzie, who was his warm friend, and who took a keen interest in all that concerned the Far West. He was kind enough to add that he knew of no other person so well qualified to satisfy him in this respect as myself.

On reaching Ottawa I duly presented myself and my letter, and after a few preliminary forms of etiquette I received intimation at the British Lion Hotel, where I had taken up my quarters, that the Premier was ready to receive me. This was my first encounter with the man who virtually ruled Canada from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. He was a spare man, of medium height, with a well-set head, and spoke in a fatherly manner, with a strong reminiscence in his accent of his native Perthshire hills. "I am glad to meet you, Mr. Campbell," he said. "I know Mr. Bannatyne very well. I have seen several very interesting quotations regarding your travels from the *Manitoba Free Press* and the *Toronto Globe and Mail*. It is quite evident that we have in our North-West Territory a country of vast possibilities. Yes, our duty

\* This letter of introduction will be found in full in the Appendix.

now is to get those vast prairies stocked with good hardy settlers. You are on your way to Scotland, I understand. Well, you know the importance of the country over which you have been travelling for these two years. Do please impress that upon the people you come in contact with. Many hard-working people in the old country would be glad to know of such a place where they could become prosperous and enjoy a free life."

Then we ran our fingers over an old map of the country, together with a rough sketch of my own. I ventured to suggest that the Canadian Pacific Railway, then under survey, was surely out of place, being at least two hundred miles too far north, and that the North-West capital should be on the Bow River, near the Rocky Mountains, instead of on Battle River. If on the former river, I added, ranchers would homestead round it, the district being much frequented by buffaloes, and in every way rich and fertile. The projected railway should start from Winnipeg and go directly over the plains to the first pass in the Rockies without diverging so far north as the survey before us indicated.

The Premier listened to every word with attention, and looked at me in some surprise.

"What if war should break out between England and America?" he said. "In that case the further the railway is from the boundary the better." This he regarded as the most important point, and I of course insisted no further. He presented me with a book containing his public speeches made during a visit to the old country the year before, and we parted.

This man, whose blameless and honourable life has been one long record of devotion to Canada, had been wholly the architect of his own fortunes. He was a born orator, but the want of early education stood in his way as a politician in the high sphere to which he had attained. When I saw him his Government term of office had almost expired, and an arduous campaign was in view. His opponent, Sir John A. Macdonald, was an astute politician, of inexhaustible fertility of resource and untiring energy. He saw that some amusement must be provided for Canada just then, something to keep her busy, and he was quite willing to take the leading rôle in the play. The country was a victim to contradictory cravings, a symptom of her awakening life: a craving for Free Trade; a craving for a "national policy" (though no nation yet awhile); a craving

for any new and violent emotion. She wished to assure her interests and gratify her imagination at the same time. "J. A.," however, was an old campaigner, and there was no fear of any yielding or any indecision on his part. His unfortunate association with the "Pacific scandal" was already almost forgotten; and, in view of his distinguished record of political service, he was almost entirely reinstated in the good opinion of his fellow-countrymen. I gathered from the Premier in my conversation with him that he was going to the country on a Free Trade platform. I told him bluntly that he could not carry it. It was quite premature in a country so young and with an enormous financial burden already on its shoulders by the acquisition of our vast territory.

From Ottawa I travelled to Montréal, the chief commercial centre of Canada, and once the pride of Louis of France. I must, however, leave it undescribed. Poor France! It was not her outward enemies, but her own unstable mind, that lost her this glorious country.

Wonderful progress this Canada has made, when it is remembered that no more than three centuries have passed since Jacques

Cartier, of St. Malo, sailed up the St. Lawrence and took possession of the picturesque peninsula of Gaspé in the name of Francis I. Truly this part of Canada is full of attraction, of inspiration, particularly on the historical side, for the future fiction writers. As it comes through the mellowing mists of the years, a wonderful, many-coloured tissue of stirring incident and striking adventure, there is no more fascinating and absorbing story than that of the French *régime* in Canada, from its beginning in the sixteenth century to its splendid, heroically tragic close on the Plains of Abraham in 1759.

Hardly less replete with suggestively picturesque material are the narratives of the early explorers and pioneers, Jesuit missionaries, traders, and fur hunters, *coureurs de bois* who penetrated the pathless wilderness of the interior, set their frail barques afloat on the great lakes, discovered the father of waters, the mighty Mississippi, and passed beyond the barrier of the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean.

On 8th November I was in Quebec, and, like the Greeks of old, I was ready to shout, "Thalatta! Thalatta!" It was more than eighteen years since I had seen the sea, far

away in the Arctic North, and now there was something vivid, poignant, indescribable, in the sensations with which I again looked upon it. The essential spirit of all the tasks and struggles, all the successes and failures, all the outer incident and inner development, of these years seemed concentrated in that moment when the smell of the ocean, though still many miles away, suddenly brought back the sensations of my far boyhood, and showed me, as it were, in an isolated picture the life that had come between. Trifling incidents sometimes mark an era in a man's life. That first breath of the sea formed the colophon to the principal chapter in mine.

As for Quebec, she has little to tell us to the credit of her mother-country, though many of her children still keep for her a loyal corner in their hearts. Her wonderful rock citadel might well seem a leisurely, a restful haven, safe from all the powers of waste and ruin. But the writing was on the wall, and such gallant sons of France as Biencourt, De Chastes, La Vérendrige, and poor Lally might fight and toil and die without a glance or a word of thanks from the revellers at Versailles or St. Cloud. Such men gave to France nearly half a continent, but she despised the gift, so fate



took it back again. Britain got it, though the life of brave James Wolfe was a high price to pay, and as I stood, hat in hand, on the Heights of Abraham, the British flag was floating over the citadel. I found monuments to the English Wolfe, the French Montcalm, and the American Richard Montgomery, who fell here in 1775 while heading an American storming party during the War of Independence. Thus Quebec has its threads of connection with the history of three great nations. It has too other associations with the greater and older world beyond its boundaries. In the Protestant cemetery is the grave of Major Thomas Scott, the brother of Sir Walter Scott. The mother of Napoleon III. sprang from a Quebec family. The father of our beloved Queen Victoria was a resident of the fort. And, as a point of special interest to myself, I recalled that Lady Matheson, the wife of the proprietor of my native island, was born here. In the early days of the colony, Abbé de Fénélon, half-brother of the famous author of *Telemachus*, lived in Quebec. And Audubon was once a visitor on St. Louis Road, collecting data and leaving his name to an avenue on St. James le Moine's Place.

Thus rich in its associations, Quebec is rich

too in natural beauty. As I stood beside the flagstaff and saw the soft light on the grey walls of the citadel, and bright gleams of sunshine on the spires and windows of the buildings sloping to the river, the white cottages of the outlying straggling villages, and the purple haze over sailing boat and ocean liner, in which I was to sail on the morrow, I thought indeed that one might wander far and not find so fair a scene as in this ancient fortress of the St. Lawrence. What most surprised me was however it happened that we conquered it at all. But General Wolfe sent his troops up a path that the French thought was practically invincible, to the Heights of Abraham. If there had been a corporal's guard at the top of the path, our men would never have reached the heights. When he reached the top Wolfe was without cannon, and Montcalm had only to keep within his defences in order to be safe from assault. But the French general issued forth from those, and fought the enemy in the open plain, with the result that he was defeated, and Quebec taken.

General Wolfe, undoubtedly, was a brave and skilful general, but had it not been for the follies on the part of his foe that he hardly

could have anticipated, he would have had to give up all hope of taking this enormously strong fortress I was now examining, and his name would not have stood out in history as one of our greatest warriors.

On 9th November the steamship *Polynesia* steamed out of the river, and the fortress sank out of sight beneath the western horizon. On the 20th I landed in Glasgow, and on 13th December in Inverness. On 7th February, 1878, I crossed the Minch to Stornoway in the steamship *Ferret*, where I learned that the "titular governor of the Lewis," who treated me so severely in my "herd-loon" days, had been dismissed from office and struck off the roll of solicitors, and narrowly saved from still further unpleasant consequences. I had no wish to be vindictive, but the memory of his unkindness had long been sore in my boyish heart. It struck me strangely that the first news to greet me on my return should be of his disgrace, which I received with sorrow. On the 9th I reached my old home, Ness, and after an absence of nineteen years found I had nearly forgotten my mother tongue. I may say with Edmund, "The wheel is come full round; I am here." What a havoc time had wrought! My second sister now lived in the old house all

alone of us. To me it seemed infinitely lonely, infinitely sad, as lonely as the great prairie itself and much more sad. History repeats itself. Things turn themselves as of yore, only they cannot bring back "the touch of the vanished hand," nor "the sound of the voice that is still." The minister, the miller-elder, and other heroes of my so-called school days had passed over to the majority, and I found a generation had grown up which "knew not Joseph." To all outward appearance my native parish had remained during these two decades *in statu quo*, only things seemed smaller than they did. The granite cliffs of the Butt seemed to have sunk into the Atlantic at least two hundred feet, and the rivers were but silver threads. Well, the prairie is wider than the Lewis, but not dearer; there are memories in the brook that ran by my mother's door that all the vast waters of the big Saskatchewan could not wash away.

"Everybody should graduate in the university of Paris," said Disraeli. So to Paris I went, though not, alas! to the university. To visit Paris to good purpose demands a preliminary education, except perhaps the Exhibition, which was being held at the date of my visit. That spectacle was to me very

wonderful, intoxicating the imagination. After so long in the inhospitable northern wilderness I found it indescribably gorgeous, fantastic, fairylike.

How to secure and bring away all the varied impressions which a review of its history suggests—the Paris of Richelieu, of the Louis', of Madame Elizabeth, of Marie Antoinette; Paris imperial, with a Buonaparte at its head; Paris republican, with the Royal princes plotting round the corner—that was too great a task for a passing visit. France has been a republic for thirty years, yet in that soil of surprises the fortunes and characters of the princes of Bourbon and Orleans may well be observed with interest. I watched a military review in honour of the Shah of Persia (Nasir-ed-Din) at Chalons, whence Napoleon III. set out to meet disaster at Sedan. I had gone to France with a certain prejudice against the French army as compared with the German, but the review changed my opinion. The physique of the men seemed excellent, and their faces wore a look of endurance and determination, as if, conscious of lost ground in the past, they had resolved to recover their prestige and their provinces. They were splendidly equipped too both with metal and with teams.

I saw all the sights : Notre Dame, with its famous *tapis des souverains*, the finest Gobelins work in the world ; the boulevards ; the Sainte Chapelle ; the Palais de Justice ; the Pantheon and Invalides, where Buonaparte is buried ; the Place de la Concorde ; the Champs Elysées ; the Palais de l'Industrie ; the Louvre ; Versailles ; St. Cloud ; St. Denis ; the resting-place of the kings, and the Hall of Mirrors, with its two hundred and forty-two feet of polished floor and its unique views over the long gardens ; the Opéra ; the wonderful tower of St. Jacques la Boucherie ; and lastly the Œil de Bœuf, which students of Carlyle and of the Revolution know so well, and in which so many public mischiefs had their origin.

I found it difficult to explain to myself why France had lost her North American possessions. Her colonial "sphere of influence" from Senegal to Siam was still great. Do civilised nations lose the courage of their primitive ancestors ? Undoubtedly the love of *la gloire* is strong in the French, and they have a dash and a chivalry far removed from cowardice. The famous householder who stayed quietly in bed when burglars were in the house, because he "would rather be a coward than a corpse," had no French blood in his

veins. It seems that life has increased in value, and in imperilling it, either in war or travel or other adventures in colonisation, the nation is staking more. Even the high-strung sensitiveness of a cultivated race may sometimes tell against it in conflict with ruder temperaments. It seems indeed in the struggle for life that that race most prospers which, by constant practice in meeting hazards, trains itself out of fear. But there are statesmen who find dangers in over-colonisation. Land-hunger may become land-fever, and nations have been known to suffer from land-indigestion. Possibly Canada was overtough a morsel for France.

In London I went, of course, to the House of Commons, honoured by the invitation and escort of the nephew of England's greatest Lord Chancellor, Sir George Campbell. General Roberts had just made his famous march on Candahar, and Lord Beaconsfield was fresh from the Berlin Congress with "Peace with Honour" in his satchel. I had long ardently wished to hear Mr. Gladstone speak, and on that evening my wish was gratified. I listened to him for an hour and a half as he stood there on the left of Mr. Speaker Brand, and felt that I had never heard oratory before. It was amazing, enthralling, exquisite. The next day

Sir George accompanied me to the House of Lords, where I found MacCallum Mhore himself, or MacCaileem Mor, son of Big Collin, Duke of Argyle, upon his feet, briskly denouncing the Government for the massacre of Balak ordered by the Sultan, Abdul Hamid.

There was something almost comically bellicose about his appearance in debate—"the Rupert of debate"—the small figure, with lifted head, crowned with a crest of waving hair, rising, as some thought, like the plume of a Gaelic chief's bonnet, and, as others saw it, like the comb of a fighting-cock. While coming south, early in June, the Duchess lay dead in London, and much sorrow was felt in the west coast of her native land. And an innkeeper at Oban expressed himself to me, while talking about the noble family, thus: "Weel, ye see, the Duke is in a vera deeficult position: his pride o' birth prevents his associating with cordiality among men of his ain intellect; and his pride of intellect equally keeps him from associating pleasantly with men o' his ain birth." Unquestionably the descendant of Earl Archibald, who fell at Flodden field, and of the unfortunate first Marquis of Argyle, executed at the Cross of



Edinburgh in 1661, the chief head of my clan, was a striking personality.

Lord Beaconsfield rose for his Government, and said: "I look to the individual character of that human being as of vast importance. He is a man whose every impulse is good. However great the difficulties he may have to encounter, however various may be the impulses that may ultimately control him, his first impulses are always good. He is not a tyrant; he is not dissolute. He is not abject; he is not corrupt." Such was the graceful panegyric on the Assassin of Turkey, pronounced by the man whom Daniel O'Connell once described as "the lineal descendant of the impenitent thief who died on the cross."

As for London itself, what can I say of the marvel of its throbbing life? I looked at it from the dome of St. Paul's, and thought how many notable Scots had here earned the oatmeal upon which to cultivate literature comfortably—Murray, Macmillan, Blackwood, Chambers, and the rest. I looked at it from the Monument, and overwhelmed myself in statistics, wonderful enough to me at the time, though small compared to the facts of to-day. The Lord Mayor, notwithstanding his high-sounding title, rules over but a single square

mile of territory ; but that square mile contains the financial pulse and heart of the world, and is the richest possession in the universe. Yet we are told on high authority the day is coming when the archæologically-disposed New Zealander will stand on Westminster Bridge and sketch the ruins of St. Paul's.

I passed on to Edinburgh, once the centre of the intellect of Britain. Time was when Sidney Smith and De Quincey were attracted to the home of Dugald Stewart and Mackintosh, of Cockburn and Scott and the Blackwoods, and when Jeffrey and Wilson and Brougham formed a literary tribunal which could crown a man or slay him. Now, alas ! Scottish lairds and Scottish nobles complete their education on the banks of the Isis.

So I had seen my native land, and, my tour over, the end of September found me snugly on board the S.S. *Devonia*, bound for New York. In the saloon or on the after-deck of an Anchor line steamship steering west, there can be seen at this season of the year more of the American lounging class than can easily be found anywhere else out of the States. Notwithstanding this lounging habit, and the hereditary vice of inquisitiveness, I found them very pleasant, free and open as their native

air. With Bunker's Hill in view we steamed into the shallow water which narrows into Sandy Hook, and on 5th October we were in New York harbour.

Wall Street was a confusion of tongues. The failure of the City of Glasgow Bank was the eagerly-discussed topic of the day. The great East River suspension bridge was then in course of construction, and on each bank lay great blocks of hard red granite from the quarries of home. Scotland has done her part in the work of empire-making. She has laid the foundation of a good many of the wonders of the modern world. New York was in a sunshiny mood, and I left it almost praying for smoked glass, lest, like Milton, I should be "blasted with excess of light."

In Ottawa I found that all my political prophecies had come true. The McKenzie administration had gone to pieces on the rock of Free Trade—an excellent thing, only premature. Sir J. A. Macdonald was undoubtedly the more accomplished politician of the two leaders. He was a curious mixture of rashness, patience, and prudent calculation, and he believed in his star. He had a knack of twisting the Canadians round at his will, and an even more useful knack of finding pleasant

ways out of difficult positions. He got round people, deputations, nations, and played with them and used them for his own ends, and kept on good terms with them all the time. He gave Canada what it wanted, a toy—a catchword. Beaconsfield came home proclaiming "Peace with Honour." Macdonald proclaimed the "National Policy," and set all Canada shouting with delight. Beaconsfield advised the Queen to style herself Empress of India. Macdonald entreated the Princess Louise to come to Ottawa to win Canadian hearts. He was a man to be studied rather than criticised.

The ex-Premier, on the other hand, was an unassuming man, remarkable chiefly for a sound acuteness of mind, a great knowledge of human nature, and a considerable fund of common sense, which he applied in his own frank unconventional way to the questions that came before him.

I do not know that either of these gentlemen wanted these appreciations written, and my fear is that when we meet in heaven they may be displeased. One thing they will not deny, and that is, that the work of a Prime Minister even in a colony is arduous. No ordinary man can think of it without a shudder, or be other than devoutly thankful that the risk of being

called upon to take this office is comparatively small.

Making my way gradually westwards by the Lakes, I stopped at Chicago. Of course, the stockyards were the first objects of interest. They can hardly, however, be described as pleasure grounds. Eighty per cent. of the Chicagoans tell you, "Oh no, I have never been to the yards myself, but you ought to see them before you leave the city." It may be added that the other twenty per cent. are employed in or about these stockyards. Chicago was unknown until one day towards the middle of the century some one slaughtered and packed the first lot of cattle and hogs. To-day the stockyards cover miles of ground. From the top of a Chicago "sky-scraper" the place must look like a town of cattle-pens. When I was there (1878) they had thirty miles of feeding-troughs and fifty miles of railway connecting the yards with the outer world. Six millions of hogs, three of cattle, and three of sheep found their way into these yards annually. The men, wearing broad soft hats and riding on wiry nags, gave a certain picturesqueness to the scene, but the atmosphere was, on the whole, just a trifle "bluggy." Those who made their fortune here preferred

to have a retreat in another suburb. Though I did not see any machines into which a hog went squealing at one end to come out sausages at the other, I certainly saw enough to convince me that if these yards were by any miracle to bob suddenly out of existence, the effect on the world's feeding arrangements would be serious.

At St. Paul's a spare, nervous man joined the train. "I guess we shall reach Winnipeg in a month," he remarked, with a strong American accent. I was much impressed with the extraordinary transparency of his slender frame. Seldom, I thought, had a body more fragile encased so energetic and active a spirit. He was exceedingly frank and talkative, full of jokes and anecdotes, a welcome companion on a lonely journey, and we soon became fast friends. Here also Mr. William Hardisty, of my Company, joined me. "My name is Anderson," said the American, "so you see I am a bit Scotch, as I take you to be." Little did I guess how soon the bright sunshine which was about him was to be darkened.

The railway to the north not being yet finished, it took a week by waggon, etc., to reach the village of Emerson in the extreme north of the States. I had travelled two

thousand miles upon their soil. A magnificent heritage indeed the Pilgrim Fathers left to their descendants. And who can predict its future? Nothing is too great to hope for it. Let but this youthful giant among the nations set herself to protect by justice what has been won by prayer and by the sword, and then we shall see what may be done in time to come by a nation armed with all the resources of wealth and civilisation, and sustained by a Christian ideal.

Mr. Anderson and I put up at the same hotel in Emerson, a tiny village standing out lone and distinct on the prairie, I to await a conveyance to Winnipeg, he to await his destiny. Here we enjoyed a maximum of luxury at a minimum of cost, as the villages clustered on each side of the boundary line were by stealth doing their best to rob each other of their customers. We beguiled the time in various ways, the most novel being in teaching me to lounge "American fashion."

One night, whilst I was reading in this new attitude, my friend hurriedly entered and began nervously pacing the room. Halting suddenly behind a door which was just being opened, he shouted at the top of his voice, "Up hands, or you are a dead man!" A

shot, a whiz, and a bullet had grazed the bridge of my nose, and entered the wall at my side. The "American fashion" had saved my life. Had I been in my usual posture I should have been the first of the trio to enter eternity. A succession of shots followed, and Anderson lay on the floor quivering in a pool of blood. The big, burly desperado who had followed him into the room was the last to fall, but soon he staggered over the chair my feet had rested on only a few seconds before. There he lay, blood spurting from mouth and nostrils like a buffalo bull. He who had killed many a man and feared none lay trembling now under the hand of death. Through the last spasm, the last quiver, the last convulsion, he firmly held the revolver, with finger on trigger, as if to guard him through the valley of the shadow. I was stupefied at the suddenness of it all. One ought, I suppose, to be astonished at no revelation of human tragedy, but I confess I was completely taken aback. He turned out to be the last of a gang of desperadoes, and the United States Government had offered ten thousand dollars for his capture, dead or alive.

When I reached Winnipeg I found myself ready to say, like the Doge of Genoa in the



Palace of Versailles, "What most surprises me about it is to see myself here." On the whole Winnipeg was a disappointment. It seemed given over to two classes of men, viz., the social derelict and the self-constituted derelict. The first were men of the Jean Valjean type, who, having made a mistake and been ostracised from society, had sought new fields, where they made herculean efforts to live down the past and become respectable citizens. The others were those who had not learned to make of failure a stepping-stone to higher things. Having left their country for their country's good, they were there under a change of sky without any change of purpose. These are the men who are *not* wanted in a new country. Most of them should be kept at home in an asylum for inebriates. The colonies of Great Britain want the best and most enterprising of her sons.

But my task is done. Winnipeg is a city now, and it is not for me to enter upon a long account of civilised life. That would be encroaching upon the ground of civilised authors. I profess only to write — very imperfectly — of savage life.

I have given merely an outline of my story, leaving out the beginning and the end, and

cutting short the middle. Such as it is, I can only ask for it the reader's lenient judgment. Whatever of error he finds in it, let him, like the recording angel, "drop a tear upon the damning page." I have given a simple record of a unique career, a career which has offered opportunities, perhaps, exceptionally wide and varied; of toiling tirelessly, of watching vigilantly, of reflecting deeply, of suffering patiently. These great solitudes have a speech and a language of their own, which need no telling, a wisdom calmer, perhaps, and wider than the wisdom of the hurrying multitude. One lesson at least they seem to teach — that out of suffering comes the serious mind, out of salvation the grateful heart, and out of deliverance faith—"Soft stillness and the night become the touches of sweet harmony."

"Beannachd leibh" = Fare ye well.

FINIS.

## APPENDIX A.

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### A TALE OF INDIANS.

THE following appears in the *Canadian Gazette* of February 4th, 1893:—

You publish this item of news from Manitoba:—"The Indians of St. Peter's Reserve, near Winnipeg, have a little crisis of their own. An Indian named Asham was declared elected chief, but supporters of his rival, Henry Prince, have made an appeal to Ottawa to unseat Asham. One is a Baptist, and the other a member of the Church of England." Having been a titular chief for a number of years among the Indians in question, may I explain the true nature of this local quarrel?

When I first entered the Chartered Company, the good chief Pequis was still alive, but shortly afterwards died at the ripe age of ninety-three years. He was one of the chiefs who signed, with the Earl of Selkirk, early in the century, the two-mile limit treaty relating

to both sides of the Red River, and in token held a medal bearing the head-image of one of the Georges. He was, moreover, the Sir Wilfrid Lawson of that rum-drinking country; but, despite his good and noble example, made far fewer converts than the untiring leader of Local Abstinence has done. That he had an intense aversion to strong drink may be gathered from the words he once used in speaking to me. He said he was more than surprised that human beings should be so fond of drinking what a dog would not taste. He died after a good innings, leaving two sons—the Henry Prince in question being the younger; the elder, by another princess, had settled himself at Nettly Creek to await the chiefship.

But events, alas! proved contrary. Early in the sixties—in those halcyon days of entire monopoly, when my worthy Company could well afford it—we were given no less than a fortnight's holiday, *i.e.*, a week at Christmas and one at the New Year—and business was all suspended at the time, in order, I presume, to give us ample opportunity of attending the countless balls and weddings which the happy season brought in its wake. About the middle of the festival season—and as I was studying

hard the Indian language of my adopted country, so essential to a youth in my capacity—the door of my one-roomed house was thrown open, and in steps that would-be chief, and gave at the same time a note from the chief officer, written evidently under some difficulty—half Scotch and half English. With considerable difficulty I succeeded, after the manner of hieroglyphy, in guessing that he was to be given so-and-so gratis—which I supplied, not thinking it was the last time I was ever to behold his face again. He would not be a convert to the father's principles, and he suffered the penalty that night, by being frozen to all eternity, after the doctrine of the Moravian missionary in Greenland!

Henry thus thought the road to the throne was clear for him, but the eldest son of the frozen "Crown Prince"—after the manner of the European Courts, thought differently. Henry, moreover, had, as sole credentials and exchequer, the father's medal, and he held to it, and became chief solely on its strength, and without the voice of all and the consent of the whole, as is the Indian custom in choosing a "brave" to be their chief. Thus the friends of the dead "Crown Prince," though silent, were always slow to follow him. He was,

besides, addicted to strong drink whenever he could get it. Proud and selfish to a fault, always full of grievances, which were, as a rule, mainly fictitious, he had become an impudent expert at begging. No one of distinction could arrive at our forts or Winnipeg without his tramping thirty miles to beg. I now speak of him without resentment, but in sober truth.

There is another element in the Reserve—the Swampie Indians, who predominate. These are pious and religious, while their Indian (Salteaux) brethren are more indifferent to the spiritual law in the natural world. So the former sent for Jeroboam—Asham—out of Egypt to rule over the tribes of Israel. Asham is one of the very few converts of old Pequis, and I cannot recall ever seeing him taste a drop of that Demerara rum warranted to kill at forty rods. This semi-jocose personal narrative may carry with it but little interest for the general reader; but I shall be curious to know the result of “an appeal to Ottawa.”

RODERICK CAMPBELL, F.R.G.S.

PARK ROAD, BUSHEY,  
*January 23rd.*

## APPENDIX B.

FORT GARRY,

11th August, 1863.

MR. WM. MCKAY,  
BERENS RIVER.

MY DEAR SIR,—Mr. Roderick Campbell leaves this week by the York Factory boats for Berens River, to establish and take charge of the new post we desire to open at the head of the river. His qualification for that position has been fully established during the three years he has been under my own immediate supervision. His marvellous capacity for acquiring the Indian languages has not only surprised myself personally, but the natives themselves are being wholly astonished at his quick acquirements. Besides, he has always proved himself to look at duty first; punctuality and diligence are likewise his habits and gifts. He has also shown high spirits which are not easily subdued, touched with sparks of pride and Celtic bravery. The tribe with whom he is to deal are both savage and bloodthirsty—those who killed poor Cummings, as you know, but mark my word, young as he is, he will teach them right from wrong.

S.K.

Y

I need not say more, except I am sorry to lose him, only of course we must have a good man there, which is more essential to our interest.

Yours sincerely,

WM. McTAVISH.

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## APPENDIX C.

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WE have received the following documents, which were lost for thirteen years in the Arctic Regions:—

HER MAJESTY'S DISCOVERY SHIP  
"INVESTIGATOR,"

POLAR SEA, OFF POINT WARREN,  
24th August, 1850.

SIR,—I have to request that you will cause the accompanying despatch for the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to be forwarded with the least possible delay, so that if it is practicable it may arrive this year. You are aware of the great interest that is attached to this expedition, and



consequently all information regarding its progress will be considered of the utmost importance.

I feel convinced it is unnecessary to urge you to exertion in performance of this duty, the honourable Company with which you are connected having with great liberality, zeal, and beneficence, expressed their desire to render every assistance in forwarding the views, not only of her Majesty's Government, but of the nation at large, in facilitating the search for the missing expedition under Sir John Franklin.

It is impossible for me to suggest any method by which this despatch may be carried, whether by Indians, specially engaged for the purpose, or through your usual communication, only permit me to beg that the most expeditious method may be pursued, and let the expenses attending its transmission be placed at the account of the Arctic Searching Expedition.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

(Signed) ROBERT McCLURE;

Commander.

To

THE OFFICER OF THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY  
AT FORT GOOD HOPE, NORTH AMERICA.

On the outside of the enclosure containing the above letter appear the following words, in Captain McClure's handwriting:—

"I would thank you to give the Esquimaux who delivers this to you some present of the most values.—R. McC."

Underneath these appears the inscription, in Mr. Roderick McFarlane's handwriting:—

"Received at Fort. Anderson, Anderson River, 5th June, 1862.—R. McFARLANE."

"Gave the Esquimaux who delivered the package one steel trap and two pounds of Negrohead tobacco.—R. McF."

---

FORT SIMPSON,

21st August, 1862.

A. G. DALLAS, Esq., *Governor-in-Chief.*

SIR,—I beg to enclose you for transmission to the Admiralty the long-missing despatches of Commander (now Captain Sir Robert) McClure, of her Majesty's discovery ship *Investigator*, entrusted by him to the Esquimaux when off Cape Bathurst in the month

of August, 1850, for the purpose of being forwarded to England, *via* Hudson's Bay posts on the McKenzie, and which despatches were received at Fort Anderson a short time ago. I may mention that ever since 1857, when I first descended and examined Anderson River (the Beghulatéssé of the map), I have endeavoured to ascertain from the Esquimaux the fate of the despatches in question, but until now without success.

This I partly attributed to the inability of the Indians who acted as interpreters to explain my wishes to the Esquimaux; and, indeed, it was only when on a visit to a party of these last February that I succeeded in obtaining information which has resulted in their discovery. . . .

The package had been cut by the Esquimaux, and several of the letters opened, probably with a view of ascertaining their contents. I annex a list of the documents as received last June, all of which (except those to the Admiralty) are now forwarded to their respective addresses.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Yours very respectfully,

(Signed) R. MCFARLANE.

List of documents recovered after thirteen years :—

4 packages addressed to the Secretary of the Admiralty, London.

1 package, Director-General, medical returns from her Majesty's discovery ship *Investigator*.

packages addressed to the Secretary of the Admiralty, London.

1 sealed letter addressed to Sir John Richardson, London.

1 sealed letter addressed to Rev. P. Latrobe.

1 sealed letter addressed to Rev. Rēginald Wynniott.

1 sealed letter addressed to O. Barrington Piers, Esq.

1 sealed letter addressed to William Bell, Esq.

1 sealed letter addressed to Francis Cresswell, Esq.

1 sealed letter addressed to (Lady) McClure.

1 sealed letter addressed to H. Sainsbury.

1 sealed letter addressed to Mrs. Law.

1 sealed letter addressed to William Armstrong, Esq.

R. McFARLANE.

## APPENDIX D.

WINNIPEG, 10/13/77.

DEAR MR. MCKENZIE.—This will introduce to you Mr. Roderick Campbell, whom I have known intimately since he entered the country some twenty years ago, in the Hudson's Bay Company's service, since which time he has not only shown energy and enterprise, but markedly so as an acute observer of passing events; and I am certain that there is not any significant point in our alarming history of his time that will be lost to history and the world. His last enterprise was a bold, nay a foolhardy, excursion of two years' sojourn and unattended into the wild country of the Saskatchewan, the savage Sioux country, and the Rocky Mountains. During his absence he furnished the press in town with various contributions, all marked by a singular perspicacity and perspicuity alike, descriptive of the country through which he passed. Mr. C. is on a visit to his native Scotland, and I trust he will disseminate, as best he can, the truly vast possibilities of our virgin Prairie province to his countrymen there!

A. G. B. BANNATYNE, M.P.

*To The HON. ALEX. MCKENZIE.*

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